

SOUND AND THE ROMANTIC EAR

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## ABSTRACT

My research recovers the background for understanding poetic sound, both as it appeared in theory—that is, in physiology and philosophy of mind—and as it occurred in practice in scenes of recitation and audition during the Romantic period. This background reveals William Wordsworth’s association of the power of sound with attention and the peculiar power of poetry to move, direct, or drive the reader’s body and mind. My study informs our understanding of the Romantic-era conception of the influence of sound on attention and influences how we understand the nature of the social charge of Wordsworth’s major works.

In this dissertation, I analyze Wordsworth’s poetry through the framework of acoustics and psychoacoustics and rely on select theoretical underpinnings from the history of science, modern cognitive poetics, and historical English linguistics to further my claims. I also build upon post-Enlightenment theories of attention and distraction and modern-day cognitive science and psychophysics. I attempt in my work to move toward experiencing poems through aural modes, as others experienced them in the Romantic period as Wordsworth composed, recited, and shared them. Studying Wordsworth’s poetry in this way reveals driving rhythms through underlying acoustical structures, and these rhythms synchronize with biological rhythms of readers of verse and result in the direction and redirection of attention. In constructing this theory, I consider possibilities for Wordsworth’s live delivery, theorize that he undertook both a pedagogical and bardic role as a poet in the social sphere, and envision readers he might have imagined. I suggest that Wordsworth reimagined notions of idiocy as refined sensibility and anticipated an inclusive interpretive community for poetry.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to everyone involved in the process of creating this manuscript: The University of Alabama faculty, staff, and students; my sage mentors; my fellow scholars, rhetoricians, writers, translators, and poets; my dear friends; and my supportive and loving family: Keith, Landen, Keely, and Julian Busby.

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## INTRODUCTION

*Thine is a strain to read among the hills,  
The old and full of voices—by the source  
Of some free stream, whose gladdening presence fills  
The solitude with sound; for in its course  
Even such is thy deep song, that seems a part  
Of those high scenes, a fountain from their heart.*  
—Felicia Hemans, from “To Wordsworth”

William Wordsworth’s intentions were not concentrated toward his poetic agenda nor were they strictly personal. Rather, they expanded outward to blend with wider social, cultural, and/or natural modes of production, as the excerpt from Felicia Hemans’s poem above shows. Because Wordsworth valued broader humanity, his work served—and still serves—beyond his poetic project.

The social origins, intellectual culture, and outcomes of the French Revolution and its ideological birthing shaped Wordsworth’s imagination and concern for his own community and thus shaped Wordsworth’s poetics and its emphasis on words and passion:

Words came in torrents, but more important was their unique, magical quality. From the beginning of the Revolution, words were invested with great passion. By the fall of 1789, . . . [a]s the king’s sacred position in society eroded, political language became increasingly invested with emotional, even life-and-death, significance. . . . Certain key words served as revolutionary incantations. . . . Revolutionaries placed such emphasis on the ritual use of words because they were seeking a replacement for the charisma of kingship. . . . [T]he ‘real’ significance of language [during this time of upheaval] is hidden . . . with the task of analysis . . . most often construed as one of unmasking. (Hunt 20-21)

Words in the mouths of revolutionaries elicited substantial consequences, and “unmasking” such penetrating use of political language for Wordsworth likely reinforced his poetic use of words and the force of their passion to affect his audience. Revolutionary speakers were passionate,

affective, and “concerned with authority” and “audience,” and Wordsworth recognized that such language shaped perception with positive and negative implications (Hunt 25). Language shaped political interests and ideologies, and it was also “a way of reconstituting the social and political world,” both in France and at home in England during Wordsworth’s time (Hunt 24-25).

Wordsworth would have been well aware that language served as an “expression of power, and power . . . [was] expressed by the right to speak for the people” (Hunt 23). His concern for the nature of man fueled his sense of preservation and need to speak on behalf of others, to use language to foster political and social change through his poetry, preserving his experiences and revolutionary sense of language through poetic effusions that could indeed bring authority or the sense of liberty to those who might lack access to such agency and advantage. Wordsworth stated with certainty that “a time of revolution is not the season of true Liberty” (“William Wordsworth: A Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff” 216). Like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, he documented the self, but the shards of selfhood Wordsworth records and poeticizes serve to document the many facets of a broader humanity, whose true liberty could be found in conversing with their own souls, which I believe his poetics teach and taught even while Wordsworth’s explicit political actions waned or became more passive.<sup>1</sup> He listened closely and spoke loudly and pushed his agenda for others to do the same in the service of not only self but also others not afforded a sense of power and humanity. At times hiding explicit political intent in verse, Wordsworth through his poetry spoke for those who could not, for reasons social,

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<sup>1</sup> I hope that through this work, I problematize and complicate notions of Wordsworthian “liberty” and critique imperialist political and educational aims and realities auralty brings to mind, as attention to auralty always makes audible historically unheard voices that have been enslaved by the English tongue, voices of those silenced, colonized, appropriated, forced into assimilation, and ignored.



political, or otherwise, and emboldened others who listened in to participate in society as was possible in their positions in spaces where the oppressed or the overlooked had no say.

In this dissertation, I suggest that Wordsworth intentionally aligned his thinking about language with the values inherent in the political language esteemed during the French Revolution: values of passion, authority, audience, perception, and persuasion that served social and political purposes, expressed power and agency, and ensured true liberty in the Wordsworthian sense. My project foregrounds sound as the vessel for the “Visionary Power” (*The Prelude*, 619) of which Wordsworth wrote and challenges the thread of research in Romantic studies that fails to articulate this emphasis on sound but instead maintains the conception that sight was more important to the Wordsworthian imagination. This emphasis on sound also dislocates Wordsworthian “Visionary Power” that “Attends upon the motions of the winds / Embodied in the mystery of words” (*The Prelude*, 619-21) from assumptions of religiosity, allowing for interpretive notions beyond those aimed toward applying orthodox religion to Wordsworthian poetics. In my work, I seek to replace traditional “close reading” with scientifically and historically informed “close listening,” which makes engaging with not only the physical but also the psychophysical sonic properties of his poetry worthwhile. I also show, through the framework of acoustics and psychoacoustics, that Wordsworth reimagined notions of idiocy as refined sensibility and anticipated an inclusive interpretive community for poetry. While the focus of the study that follows is Wordsworth, Wordsworth himself is in part a vessel for a wider social, cultural, discursive logic of the poetics of the Romantic period.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> In my view, this project synthesizes Lake, Satanic, and Cockney schools of thought, but the complexities and intricacies of this claim must be articulated at a later date. See Jerome McGann’s “Poetry.” *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age*. Oxford UP, 1999.

Much of Wordsworth's poetry "evokes the ecstasies of wandering, nature, solitude, and reverie" that are extolled in Rousseau's "Sylvie's Walk" (1747), and yet it also performs in its undercurrent the "invasive sense of anxiety, hostility, persecution, and torment" found in Rousseau's later work (Goulbourne ix). Many connections can be drawn between the two men, as can many differences, but what I find most prevalent in likeness is the dialogic quality of their writing and each one's focus on the interactivity between self, sound, and motion, what we could term *psychosonicmotion*. Rousseau writes in *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* (1782):

Let me give myself over entirely to the pleasure of conversing with my soul, for this is the only pleasure that my fellow men cannot take away from me. . . . The leisure of my daily walks has often been filled with delightful thoughts which I am sorry to have forgotten. I shall preserve in writing those which come to me in the future: every time I reread them I shall experience the pleasure of them again. (7-8)

In this statement of purpose, I find parallels to Wordsworth's poetic project, a dialogic project consumed by the acknowledgment of the sense of a true, personal liberty, a close listening to self in motion in the interest of preserving ideas in writing for future recollection and pleasure: a preservation that for Wordsworth is "abundant recompense" for any sense of loss, anxiety, or grief he endured ("Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" 89). However, in Rousseau's *Reveries*, "he makes a point of addressing only himself, since all he seeks, as he spells out in the First Walk, is to understand himself," marking the work as "profoundly introspective and personal" (Goulbourne xiii). Rousseau had concerned himself with "the problems of man in society and with the tensions between society in nature" (Goulbourne x). Some thirty years prior to *Reveries*, consequences had led Rousseau to abandon his civic project

and had driven him into exile, but Wordsworth's works, in contrast, draw in others and others' voices in the service of broader humanity, engaging continually his civic project.<sup>3</sup>

Concerned with not only articulating others' voices to be heard by others but also hearing his own voice speak itself out, Wordsworth arguably privileged close listening and thus positioned sound at the forefront of his poetics as

*A presence* that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a *sense sublime*  
Of *something far more deeply interfused*,  
Whose *dwelling is the light* of setting suns,  
And the round ocean, and *the living air*,  
And *the blue sky*, and in *the mind of man*,  
*A motion and a spirit*, that impels  
All thinking things, *all objects of all thought*,  
And *rolls through all things*. ("Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey"  
95-103; emphasis added)

The "presence" (95) here is sound, in my view, and the "sense sublime" (96) is hearing.

I connect my assertion that close listening and sound occupy a central place in Wordsworth's poetics to ideas about language that informed his thinking in large part circulated by the debates regarding thought, language, experience, ideas, and things that existed before and as his poetics took shape. Wordsworth's position can be traced from John Locke's first articulation in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (see "Of Words") to Leibniz to Berkeley to James Burnet, Lord Monboddo to Locke's French follower Étienne Bonnot de Condillac to John Horne Tooke to Destutt de Tracy to the *idéologues*, and my argument for

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<sup>3</sup> In Rousseau's view, politics "was the root of social life," and humanity's "character . . . depended on the nature of its government" (Hunt 1). Rousseau served as the "spiritual guide" for French revolutionaries, but he neither witnessed nor could have imagined how "government became an instrument for fashioning a people" through the Revolution, as "the very notion of 'the political'" transformed in the process into an "emotional and symbolic" concept (Hunt 2-3). For more, see Lynn Hunt's *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*. U of California P, 1984.

sound as fundamental in Wordsworth's poetics follows from a synthesis of such conceptions (Keach 95-110). William Keach surveys this theoretical terrain and traces how Romantics

conceptualized key issues of verbal representation—how they thought about the relation of words to thoughts and to things, about the social and historical processes through which language is formed and changed, about the connection of ordinary speech to formal prose and verse. (96)

From Lockean ideas about sensation and reflection and being naturally “fashioned . . . to be *fit to frame articulate Sounds*” and “able to use these Sounds, as Signs of internal Conceptions; and to make them stand as marks for the Ideas within [our] own Mind, whereby they might be made known to others,” Keach begins his project (Locke qtd. in Keach 98). From Locke, Keach moves on to Leibniz and his argument that “many words have their origin in imitations of natural sounds (onomatopoeia), and more generally” (102)

‘that there is something natural in the origin of words that indicates a relation between things and the sounds and movements of the vocal organs . . . words have come into being as occasion rose from the analogy of sound with the disposition of the mind that accompanied the perception of the thing.’ (Leibniz qtd. in Keach 102)

Following his exploration of Leibniz, Keach entertains Berkeley's assertion that “passions . . . arise, immediately in [the] mind upon the perception of certain words, without any ideas coming between,” a notion that I connect implicitly to my thinking in later chapters about not only precategorical perception but also direct perception (qtd. in Keach 102-03). From Berkeley, Keach addresses Monboddo's claim that language is not only “the expression of the conceptions of the mind by articulate sounds” but also “is not ‘natural’ but ‘acquired’” (qtd. in Keach 103), an argument about language as a formal system and “an object of study” (104). Monboddo's thinking leads to Condillac's declarations that reflection is “possible only when the mind learns to invent signs for its own use,” and “thinking cannot evolve beyond the elaborations of memory without the creation of language as we know it” (Keach 104-05). This relationship between the

mind and language brings us to Horne Tooke's theory that "all mental activity is really linguistic activity," an idea carrying political danger and oppressive implications to the people in revolutionary times (Keach 105), and envisioning Tracy's later conviction that "language is as necessary for thought itself as for giving expression to it" (qtd. in Keach 106). Keach connects each of these points of thought to Wordsworth's ideas about language and thought and states that the 1800 preface to *Lyrical Ballads* "bears the stamp of Lockean and Condillacian principles" and is "indebted to empiricist thinking," though he also attests that Wordsworth created his own version of these principles, innovating where his own thinking conflicted with the others' (107).<sup>4</sup> Wordsworth, as Keach explains, pursued spontaneity in emotion, not arbitrariness. He valued real language, subjectivity, transcendence, and transvalue, a project of language which Keach translates as "language expressive of unembellished powerful emotion and at the same time sanctioned by particular communities living close to nature" (108). Wordsworth believed, per Keach's assertions, "that words must incorporate or embody thoughts," and he writes that Wordsworth's use of words "gives us a profound sense of the pressure and action of the material world and of the physical significance of writing itself" (109). All of these ways of thinking about verbal representation suggest Wordsworth's intention to produce poetry with sound poetics in mind.

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<sup>4</sup> Molly Desjardins claims that Wordsworth's thinking departs from Locke's through "the model of the mind proposed by *Lyrical Ballads*"; she argues that "The Idiot Boy" was written "in the context of contemporaneous psychiatric debates over idiocy" because Wordsworth sought to "expand Locke's epistemology, as put forward in his *Essay*, in order to establish how emotion and the body organize and disorganize knowledge" (142). See Desjardins's "Idiotic Associations: Wordsworth and Nineteenth-Century Discourses on Idiocy." *Liberating Medicine, 1720-1835*, edited by Tristanne Connolly and Steve Clark, Pickering & Chatto, pp. 141-52.

As my intention is in part to recover Wordsworth's intentions, I justify this approach through evidence that reveals his relationship to sound poetics through his implicit and explicit participation in the discourses of elocution, audition science, and political oratory. While I understand that some critics are trained to be skeptical about approaches to literature anchored in appeals to intentionality, "[R]omantic writers and critics" emphasize "individual experience and inner vision, which constitute for them the nature of the work an artist produces" (Raval 612). Anti-intentionalists claim that "we have no verifiable access to" the "poet's original experience"; they argue for the "inherent unreliability of the poet's capacity to explain his i[n]tention"; and they conceive "the theoretical problems of creativity and criticism as definitional and conceptual problems to be settled by rigorous logical scrutiny" (Raval 612). To those skeptical about approaching Wordsworth in this way, I admit that I am a critic who values the experiences and imaginative vision of the Romantic writers I study, but I attest to the rigorous logical scrutiny with which I approach Wordsworth's historical presence as evident in this dissertation. While I cannot verify Wordsworth's experiences, I can historicize them, and I engage in that work. In every chapter, I support through my research that Wordsworth's original discourse and contexts have been historically documented and are evident in his poetics as well as in his personal canon. The documents I excerpt reveal Wordsworth's ability to explain his intentions, but these intentions are not without the need for clarification and analysis, as the complexities of Romanticism always inform and complicate how we theorize Romantic writers. Still, the experiences of Romantic writers are in fact part of what constitutes much of the theoretical and practical scholarship comprising Romantic ideas, and Romantic writers provide us with "some knowledge of what" they "set out to do," logical or not (Raval 612). According to Suresh Raval, Romanticism "is a historical phenomenon" that "gives rise to a host of conceptual and

definitional problems not resolvable by some unitary and objective logical procedure” (612).

While that may be true, I aim in my work to show that the scientific, philosophical, social, political, cultural, and natural intersections in Wordsworth’s life all point toward a more diffuse intention at work within his verse.

In my ear, Wordsworth’s writings always showcase sound’s ability to capture the qualities of his own immersive processes. His life fused with poetry, and poetry was within and outside of him. The beauty of Wordsworth, in my view, is that, through poetry, he was able to capture his own immersed nature—personally, socially, politically, and naturally. That quality inherent in his writing still remains, and we hear even today the sounds of Wordsworth’s verse blending with the voices of the poets before and after him, with the waters and birds around him, with the soundscape we presently occupy—as Hemans did. We hear it if we practice close listening. He captured his own sonic moment through poeticizing its auditory scenes, documenting an acoustic ecology by layering sonic environments of which he was a part, physically, psychophysically, and imaginatively. By relocating these auditory scenes into verse, he preserved his own auditory perception in reality and ideality and for futurity, reifying his own immersive tendencies to attend to sound through his Romantic ear and prompting our own attention to do the same by reading his work. Through Wordsworth, by dislocating ourselves from our sonic environments to join his auditory scenes, we become aware of our own unique sonic environments that inform—even enhance and disrupt—the acoustic ecology of listening to Wordsworth. Through his verbal representation, Wordsworth mediates aurality by pulling his auditory scenes into our sonic worlds to intervene in our present and future systems of aurality.

That said, I intend to show that Wordsworth conceptualized key issues of verbal representation through sound poetics. Sounds are articulated, conceptualized internally, and

shared socially. They influence the passions, can be heard by others who listen in, and are thus socially and politically charged. Sounds are both expressed and received, they embody consciousnesses and seem to have a consciousness of their own. These pressure disturbances are inscribed physically and psychophysically on the world, vocalized or symbolized through the body, the ear, and the mind, and recorded in the act of writing, which, for Wordsworth, happened extemporaneously while not only reciting poetry but also composing it aloud.

Research shows that Wordsworth's poetic recitations, others' reactions to them, and his public and private habits of composing aloud while walking were well documented by friends and family. William Hazlitt's memory of Wordsworth's recitations and Dorothy Wordsworth's correspondence about her brother's composing processes suggest much about Wordsworth's effect on his listening audience as well as his peripatetic habits. The *Oxford English Dictionary Online (OED)* defines the term "peripatetic" through its Greek etymology as "given to walking about," with the prefix "peri" meaning itself "to tread, to walk" ("peripatetic, n. and adj."). I use the term to describe Wordsworth's habits of poetic composition for two reasons, his tendency to remain in motion composing poetry and his reputation for mumbling his speech while pacing during these moments. Peripatetic in its adjective form is defined in these two senses, as both "[m]oving about from place to place" (def. 2a) and "[o]f speech or writing: rambling" (def. 4). Whether Wordsworth's walking and composing happened in public on the grounds of Dove Cottage or Rydal Mount, on the footpaths in and around these places, elsewhere, or more privately indoors, it seems that others were attentive and interested in hearing his recitations. In 1838, friend and transcriber Isabella Fenwick noted Wordsworth's process while he composed *The Prelude*, documenting the following in a letter to her cousin:

The beloved old poet has again begun to read me his MS., so in time I hope to hear it all. You will read it in time, my dear . . . , but I fear you may never *hear*



that ‘song divine of high and passionate thoughts, to their own music chanted,’ as I have heard it. It was almost too much emotion for me to see and hear this fervent old man, the passionate feelings of his youth all come back to him, making audible this ‘linked lay of truth.’ (qtd. in Wordsworth, Abrams, and Gill 537; emphasis original)

Like Fenwick, Wordsworth’s listeners remember his affective recitations, and his performances—“‘to their own music chanted’”—captivated and provoked emotion in his audience, keeping them always eager for his next rendering.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout this dissertation, I take interest in the sounds Wordsworth produced with his voice and the effects of those sounds on a listening audience. The responses to Wordsworth’s sounds documented are few but various, and the UK Reading Experience Database, which includes more accounts from others who have read aloud, studied, and heard Wordsworth’s texts in other contexts, offers additional responses to the sounds of his poetry. The entries in this database show that many readers from diverse socioeconomic groups read and heard Wordsworth for consolation, for liberation, for both autodidactic and institutional education, or for various other purposes. The sounds of his poetry affected a variety of readers who were listening differently. For Hazlitt and Fenwick, the sounds Wordsworth produced during his recitations seem prophetic, passionate, spiritual, pleasurable, and musical. For the peasantry of his community, Wordsworth’s sounds were noises arousing fear, astonishment, and at times, humor.<sup>6</sup> I point out these differences not to comment on aesthetic taste in the listeners but to

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<sup>5</sup> See Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s poem “To William Wordsworth: Lines composed, for the greater part on the Night, on which he finished his recitation of his Poem (in thirteen Books) concerning the growth and history of his own mind. Janry., 1807. Coleorton, near Ashby de la Zouch.” Also see Morton D. Paley’s “‘To William Wordsworth’ and Coleridge’s Later Poetry.” *The Wordsworth Circle*, vol. 26, no. 2, 1995, pp. 45-50.

<sup>6</sup> Edmund Burke acknowledges that “noise . . . awake[n]s a great and awful [sic] sensation in the mind . . . and by the sole strength of the sound, so amazes and confounds the imagination” (75-76). See Burke’s *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, edited by Adam Phillips, Oxford UP, 2008.

suggest that understanding Wordsworth's sublime delivery as audio is essential to the historical meaning and effects of his poetry.

Scholars and critics have long considered Wordsworth and his sense of hearing and sound representation in their work, but some rely on more ocularcentric explanations instead of inclusive perceptual understandings of auditory sense, which include not only physical but also psychophysical considerations of sound in poetry that quiet the eye. Brian Morris surveyed this field of sonic inquiry in Wordsworth's work in the 1970s. In Morris's work, he alludes to Geoffrey Hartman's *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-1814*, and his analysis of the soundscapes of "The Evening Walk" and "Descriptive Sketches"; Morris also includes excerpts from John Hollander's "Wordsworth and the Music of Sound" from 1972, in which Hollander writes about the musicality of Wordsworth's form and its ability to focus auditory attention (113). J. C. Smith's analysis from 1946 is also excerpted, and Smith suggests that Wordsworth's ear was quite sensitive to "'natural sounds,'" but he argues that "'[s]ounds did not feed his imagination as sights did'" (qtd. in Morris 112). In Morris's longer excerpt from Smith's work, we get a more comprehensive sense of what not only Smith but also Samuel Taylor Coleridge thought about Wordsworth's ear:

'Wordsworth's ear . . . was . . . very sensitive to a certain order of sounds, namely to natural sounds, especially the sounds of wind and water. . . . In one respect, I believe, the poet's ear was even more important to him than his eye. Sounds did not feed his imagination as sights did, but they were singularly potent to stimulate it, to induce the poetic mood. . . . Two sounds in particular . . . the rocking of leafy trees in a high wind and the beating of rain upon the roof. . . . Another sound that moved Wordsworth to poetry was the sound of running water: he tells us that he composed thousands of lines by the side of the brook that runs through Easedale. . . . But Wordsworth's ear had one serious limitation: he had little or no sense of tune. Coleridge says simply that he had no ear for music. . . . The conclusion that Wordsworth was more sensitive to the volume and timbre of sounds than to varieties of pitch is confirmed by the language he uses in describing the notes or cries of birds . . . wrens, larks, and linnets all "warble," redbreasts "trill," blackbirds "whistle," thrushes "pipe". . . . But . . . there is

something highly individual ... in the “faint wail” or “angry barking” of the lone eagle, the “iron knell” of the raven flying high across the sky. . . . Wordsworth’s ear for rhythm, though good, was not remarkable . . . the form of rhythm that appealed most to him was not audible but visible rhythm, “eye-music” as he calls it—

The soft eye-music of slow-waving bough . . . .’ (qtd. in Morris 112)

Smith’s analysis shows that Wordsworth was indeed sensitive to external sounds in addition to those more inward and embodied. His attention to both visible and audible rhythms suggests he was thinking beyond physical sounds to psychophysical sonic possibilities, wherein thought exists as perceived sound. David Haney in his work on sight and hearing argues that sight “must be read alongside the priority granted to hearing,” noting that Wordsworth would “register . . . his objections to the excess of one kind of subjectivity in the modern world and the denial of an earlier, more authentic kind” (199). Haney writes that

Language is both heard and seen, vocal and written in Wordsworth, and both heard and seen language can be articulate or inarticulate, common place or visionary, usurping of experience or continuous with experience, representational or performative. (176)

Sounds, then, per Haney, both physical and psychophysical, are associated not with the dominance of the eye but with a cooperation of eye and ear. Haney’s view supports that, for Wordsworth, “hearing has always remained in the picture” for perception “both as sight’s partner and as its potential adversary” (182). Auditory sense is thus central to experiencing Wordsworth’s poetry as eye-music, which holds readerly attention formally through not only sound imagery and visible rhythms but also perceptually as sound is perceived both physically and psychophysically.

Sounds force readers to attend to them and elicit sensations as readers apprehend their functions in the texts, creating ambiances that move others emotionally, and Wordsworth’s mindfulness to this aesthetic possibility is evident. Wordsworth realized the power of sound as

an asset in his poetics and defended his poem “On the Power of Sound” in a letter to Alexander Dyce in 1837:

I cannot call to mind a reason why you should not think some passages in “The Power of Sound” equal to anything I have produced; when first printed in *Yarrow Revisited* [1835], I placed it at the end of the Volume, and in the last edition of my poems [1836-7], at the close of the *Poems of Imagination*, indicating thereby my *own* opinion of it. (qtd. in Gill 725; emphasis original)

He valued this work, and James Chandler argues that it “reveals something crucial . . . about the electric life which there is in its words, in its auditory effects and affects” (“The ‘Power of Sound’ and the Great Scheme of Things: Wordsworth Listens to Wordsworth”). Recently, more critics have begun to examine sonic import in Wordsworth’s poetry and specifically its relation to affect. Carmen Faye Mathes writes about Wordsworth’s use of sound to make “what is beyond imagining . . . available through listening” (316). Mathes first calls on Jordan Scott, whose research “suggests that listening to sound without form . . . might generate insight at the affective and precognitive level” (316). Much of Mathes’s thinking I situate with Simon Jarvis’s critical work on musical thinking and thinking in verse and with Alexander Freer’s critique of Kant’s treatment of music and study of Wordsworth’s use of meter to generate affect. Freer claims that “[a]nalogously to Kant, there is a radically musical reading of Wordsworth’s poetics in which sensitivity to . . . and comprehension of ‘the great and universal passions of men’ . . . are made possibl[e] by a kind of listening” (335). The perception of rhythms and understanding the value of close listening involves not only understanding the ear and mind at work on poetry but also the poetry at work from the poet’s ear and mind to the text to affect the reader.

The affective force of sound has a social charge and thus political and possible religious implications. Mathes argues in her analysis of listening in Wordsworth’s 1803 sonnet “To Toussaint L’Ouverture” that “we do not hear poetry’s ‘aural qualities’ in the way a romantic

reader would,” but we can understand Wordsworth’s “ability to bring form to experience” (321-22). Writing about the material force of feeling through sound, Mathes suggests its political power. Michele Speitz analyzes Wordsworth’s soundscapes, and in her work on echoes and murmurs, she writes that “[w]ithin Wordsworth’s acoustic imagination, poetry’s enfolded lyrics and ballads house the reliquary echo of a living word, a small part of the earth’s larger, acoustically active worlds” (642). These textual soundscapes act on our own sonic environments and create a flux of acoustic activity in an aesthetic exchange between past and present.

With the acoustic environment so active, preserving sound is problematic due to the variability in reproducing sounds. Ryan Haas reads “Tintern Abbey” as if it were a “musical inscription,” relates his analysis to “reformist rhetoric of religious chant practices” (85), and argues that

[i]n a literal sense, sounds, unlike images, cannot be very accurately described in other media for their preservation. Greek rhetoric had no sonic equivalent for ekphrasis; and Latin similarly has no aural synonym to pair with *ut pictura poesis*. Sound must be physically imprinted or inscribed in the world for its survival. . . . [T]he critical ear of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries listened to literature as intently as it read. . . . [M]emory was beginning to reassert a vital aesthetic importance, and there was no recording eye to remember for it. (86-87)

Haas considers the aural tropes of music and sound in Wordsworth’s poetry and the impact of the audible in his poetic theory, implicitly calling for an aural ekphrasis even while explicitly recognizing the impossibility of certainty in sound descriptions and preservation.

This survey of research contributes to my understanding of Wordsworth’s *oeuvre* in relation to sound through various lenses, such as classical poetics; affect theory; social, political, and religious approaches; and media theory concepts that emphasize sound as a then-unrecordable medium, but these approaches do not adequately consider how sound and hearing were understood in the science, philosophy, and poetics of the Romantic period. As a result, they

tend to misrepresent what Wordsworth recognizes as the mechanisms and powers of the sound of poetry in the Romantic ear. By reframing Wordsworth's figures of sound in this context, I dispute, first, the claim that Wordsworth's imagination was fed more by sight than sound; I find Wordsworth's imagination through synchronization and simultaneity and contend that his poetry is the result of attention to multisensory stimuli. Therefore, I also cannot agree that the visual rhythm is more interesting in Wordsworth's work than audible rhythm because first, the two are complementary for today's audience, and second, for Wordsworth, as I understand his process of composing aloud, visual rhythm would have been secondary to the audible rhythm performed during a public recitation. Finally, in response to Haas's work, in particular, I argue that sounds need not be "very accurately described" for them to be preserved because we do not all hear in the same way, and inclusive acts of auditory perception must be respected and further considered in literary study (Haas 86-87). In Charles E. Speaks's work, he defines sound, and the definition of sound shifts depending on which properties are emphasized—the physical or the psychological ones, so descriptions will not always be stable (2).

This dissertation recovers the background for understanding poetic sound in British Romantic culture, both as it appeared in theory—that is, in physiology and philosophy of mind—and as it occurred in practice in scenes of recitation and audition. This background, clarified by comparison with modern-day cognitive science, reveals Wordsworth's association of the power of sound with attention and the peculiar power of poetry to move, direct, or drive the reader's body and mind. Recognizing this influence changes how we understand the nature of the social charge of major works, such as *The Prelude*, and the religious context for *Peter Bell, a Tale in Verse*.

While the research I have reviewed has considered sound in one way or another in Wordsworth's poetry, no one study has examined the possibility of transforming written text into audible sound. This lack of attention to audibility was not the case in the eighteenth century, however. Noelle Chao writes that Joshua Steele, John Thelwall's mentor according to Richard Gravil, outlined in his 1775 *Essay Towards Establishing the Melody and Measure of Speech*, which was later published in 1779 as *Prosodia Rationalis*, "a complex system for recording the voice in print, involving, among other things, a modified musical staff with extra divisions of pitch and rhythm, and a range of additional markings to indicate emphasis and force" (245). Chao's work on Steele addresses a gap in research on recording technology and claims that while the standard narrative and media history focuses on the nineteenth century and its technological advancements as the point of origin for recording, in fact, the "eighteenth-century writings on music and elocution developed their own logic of recording through the medium of print" (258). Steele's methods, while deemed implausible by some critics, were embraced by a select few who supported "conveying sound through the medium of print" using "written markings that could reliably and accurately communicate specific sounds" (Chao 247). Chao argues that "for scholars today, his technology for recording has the potential to amplify eighteenth-century practices of reading and listening, practices made nearly impossible to hear or imagine by modern advances in sound preservation" (247). I argue in this dissertation that we should consider using similar methods of capturing poetic sounds, speech sounds, and soundscapes embedded in Romantic poetry using today's technological apparatuses as a method of preserving and experimenting with our own close listening acts.

Elocutionary history offers an innovative approach to understanding Romanticism. Judith Thompson insists that “much remains to be done to recover and re-evaluate elocutionary history and theory in relation to Romanticism,” reinforcing that

Romanticism has come down to us as an imaginative rather than a performative movement, a movement of mind rather than mouth . . . ; and, . . . this bias against speech has coloured not only literary history but the study of language itself. . . . Coleridgean critical values still prevail in the scholarly tendency to value the word-as-sign over the word-as-voice: texts are studied more than performances . . . ; reading is assumed to be a solitary, silent process rather than a public, spoken performance; and the public sphere is taken to be synonymous with print culture, with little attention to its significant oral dimensions. (22-23)

While attention has begun to shift toward “actual circumstances and active effects of particular speech acts, utterances, genres, and performances” (Thompson 23), I have found no substantial evidence to date that Wordsworth’s work has been examined through the lens of elocutionary theory as it relates to the sound of speech acts and the effects of such, but it is through this notion of the “language really used by men” that I view Wordsworth’s poetic theory as he documented it in the 1802 “Preface to *Lyrical Ballads, with Pastoral and Other Poems*” (97).<sup>7</sup> Instead of only approaching Wordsworth’s work linking the linguistic to the thematic, I examine the linguistic on its own using Romantic theories of hearing and philosophies of sound. Roman Jakobson in “Linguistics and Poetics” “distinguished the context (circumstances described in the message) from the code (the language system that lets the message be put into words),” and Andrew

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<sup>7</sup> From this point on, I refer to this text in short as the “Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*.” For the record, Judith Thompson’s work on John Thelwall and elocution ignited my interest in this project. I hear in much of Wordsworth’s poetry dialogic speakers who situate and control relationships among themselves and audiences at times using comedy in the service of arousing sympathy through gesture, body language, and tone. Thompson acknowledges similar characteristics in the details of Thelwall’s own practice (“Re-sounding Romanticism . . .” 26-27). See more in Thompson’s “Re-sounding Romanticism: John Thelwall and the Science and Practice of Elocution” in Alexander Dick and Angela Esterhammer’s *Spheres of Action: Speech and Performance in Romantic Culture*. U of Toronto P, 2009, pp. 21-45.



Elfenbein writes that “[m]ost literary scholarship on language absorbs code into context, rather than recognizing its potential autonomy” (4). I examine code on its own merits, looking at how the language system, i.e., speech sounds, influences the context and vivifies the physical and psychophysical soundscapes of the poetry (4).

To consider Wordsworth’s poetry on these terms, I envision a certain kind of reader of poetry who advances what Elfenbein calls the “impression of style,” a reader addressed repeatedly by Wordsworth in paratexts (41). Consideration must be given to the kind of reader Wordsworth visualized as he apprised his “Reader” of his style and intent to “look steadily” at his “subject” (“Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*” 600). I do not think that Wordsworth was using “subject” only for its connotations of theme or topic. Rather, he was thinking about the whole of his work in relation to its parts by considering the “subject” position of his “Reader.” In Chao’s examination of Steele’s system of recording printed language, she also includes a section on musical systems of notation, wherein she writes about composer Charles Avison’s preface to his *Six Concertos in Seven Parts*, opus 3 (1751) (253). In his preface, Avison gives “instructions to musicians attempting to tackle his compositions” (Chao 253). Chao states that “[a]nnoyed that musicians haphazardly launch into performances without any consideration of the parts meant to complement their own, Avison complains that ‘the intention of the whole’ is lost due to ill preparation” (253). Therefore, Avison offered his preface to address the limits of print. He wanted to ensure that musicians had some understanding of the other parts of the piece and how those parts worked together to create the whole. Wordsworth’s Preface and other paratexts serve a similar function to produce readers who know their parts but who also submit to the authority of Wordsworth. The subject in every sense of the word is recognized on these terms, and Wordsworth anticipates readers who will accommodate him and realize the score in conjunction

with their contributions. Such a reader must be the kind of reader Steele had in mind in his *Essay and Prosodia Rationalis*:

[T]he reader of such printed symbols is understood to be not only a reader who processes printed text in a silent, sonic vacuum, but a reader-listener, who is able to hear what is being communicated in print within his or her mind's eye. This reader-listener is often cast as a reader-listener-performer, whom the writer anticipates will rehearse the sounds captured within the text, using the manual's directions to achieve an ideal pronunciation of the words set forth. (Chao 258)

Wordsworth wrote to guide this kind of reader-listener-performer, leaving behind a methodology for his living words to be conveyed by his readers-listeners-performers through the force of sound.

The auditory information transferred through recitations generates possible acoustic presences that both pervade and enhance the reading and meaning-making experience, so we must reconceive such original auditory renderings as much as possible. David Perkins writes about the way Romantic poetry was experienced by readers of its time. His work focuses on the “auditory aspects” of poetry and how trends in criticism have “diminish[ed] the role of auditory qualities in poetry, of the volume, tempo, pitch, inflection, rhythm, and patterning of spoken syllables” (655). Perkins argues for the importance of thinking about the oral delivery of poetry, its temporality, and the Romantics’ experience of live verse and calls on Hegel’s *Aesthetics* to claim that poetry should be

‘spoken, sung, recited, represented through living persons as musical works are . . . [since,] according to the concept of it, poetry is essentially *sounded*. . . . And since *inwardness* should be the soul of recitation, the expression of it should rely on the musical aspect and partly allow, partly necessitate a manifold modulation of the voice, song, instrumental accompaniment, and the like.’ (qtd. in Perkins 656; emphasis original)

Hegel’s thinking here is in accord with Wordsworth’s. In his preface to the 1815 *Poems*, Wordsworth declares that lyrical poems “cannot have their due force without a supposed musical

accompaniment,” which, he affirms, for him, is “nothing more than an animated or impassioned recitation, adapted to the subject”; poems “cannot read themselves,” and “the Reader” must not be “deprive[d]” of “a voluntary power to modulate, in subordination to the sense, the music of the poem” (629-30). This modulating on the part of the audience, as I theorize it, happens much like Wordsworth’s own during his recitations, but according to Perkins, readers have difficulty imagining what Wordsworth’s recitations might have sounded like:

Whether it was closer to chanting or to singing, Romantic recitation was far more musical than we now conceive. Tempo, volume, and tone of voice altered to express changing emotions, and the whole effect was more emotional and less inhibited than it usually is at present. The great change between then and now is partly that readers today hear poetry less, and this is true whether “hear” is understood literally or figuratively. They do not hear poetry recited as frequently, and when they read poetry silently, they do not hear it with the auditory imagination. Moreover, to the extent that readers still imagine the sound of poems, they have internalized a style of delivery quite different from that of the early nineteenth century. (665)

I propose reimagining Romantic recitation by focusing intently on the auditory imagination to reconceive Wordsworth’s recitations. In effect, if we rehear Romantic poetry through Romantic recitation, we can envision anew the sonic possibilities and reconceptualize Wordsworthian recitation to produce what I call auditory translations. An auditory translation requires using the auditory imagination to listen and to hear Romantic poetry the way it asks to be heard, the way it could have been recorded using Steele’s marking system, and the way it might have been perceived in its recitation contexts by past audiences. In this reimagining and translating, we can not only conceive the many possibilities associated with the authentic, originary acoustic ecologies of those past sound events as much as possible but also capture present sonic possibilities located within the acoustic ecologies of Romantic poetry.

Romantic acoustic ecologies are not defined solely by words on the page but in how we represent and process those words through our diverse imaginative natures and multimodal

literacies. As interlocutors or readers-listeners-performers of Romantic poems today, we can use our distinct natures and multimodality to enable the regeneration of Romanticism. Authentic engagement with poetry beyond the textual confines and printed page can embolden flexibility in sound perception through not only linguistic variation but also multimedia tools and applications. In such a capturing and regenerating process of auditory translation, a reader-listener-performer can listen and represent their engagement with the texts' audio as not only physical sound but also psychophysical (i.e., perceived). Considering Wordsworthian recitation for the future ensures the development of new frameworks and engagements with poetry, and new methodologies diversify how poetry is both understood and taught.<sup>8</sup>

While the effects of Wordsworth's poetry are no longer achieved by a chanting and passionate deep voice groaning and muttering and thundering and mumbling, they are achieved by various rhythmic impulses, which not only originate in the verse as directed by the poet through the underlying acoustic and psychoacoustic structures but are also recreated with each new reading during an audience's passionate engagement with the physical and psychological sound of the poem through the internal processing of emotion and rhythm according to one's own sense of music. In this project, I attempt to move beyond unidimensional notions of printed or written words on a page toward experiencing these poetic works through aural modes, as others experienced them as Wordsworth composed them, recited them, and shared them based on the evidence intrinsic in his poetry and writings and in contemporary records of his recitations.

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<sup>8</sup> My scholarship considers and may enhance current tools that exist for this kind of engagement: HiPSTAS at <http://hipstas.org/>; RhymeDesign at <http://www.sci.utah.edu/~nmccurdy/rhymeDesign/>; Sounding Out! at <https://soundstudiesblog.com/>; and Sound Poetics at [soundpoetics.com](http://soundpoetics.com).

Studying Wordsworth's poetry in this way reveals driving rhythms through underlying acoustical structures, and these rhythms synchronize with the biological rhythms of readers of verse and direct and redirect attention, much in the way Wordsworth's voice did when he performed his recitations and composed aloud for any listening audience. Such sound patterns command the audience's close attention and physical revival and participation in its movement. Susan Stewart claims that poetry demands that we pay attention to sound. She says that "we are always *recalling* sound with only some regard to an originating auditory experience" (68; emphasis original). The "poem is an utterance," and "we are interested in attending to both *what* the poem says and *how* the poem says as part of a semantic orientation in perception" (Stewart 68-9; emphasis original). And since we are unable to reconstruct the "auditory conditions of the poem's production, our recalling will always have a dimension of imagination" (Stewart 69). Using the auditory imagination, we hear the poem we see before us by perceiving it for ourselves, and the underlying acoustical structures of the work function as driving rhythms, bringing our biological rhythms into synchronization (Jones 322-23). According to Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus, "body-based rhythms . . . have great relevance above all in musical performances, as well as in . . . spoken poetry" (168). Meyer-Kalkus notes that "[w]hat fuses the heard and the seen" in such performances "is primarily the kinaesthetic dimension that takes possession of viewers and listeners and that indeed . . . becomes a bodily reality for them" (168). Essentially, "[w]hat grabs . . . us and takes us out of ourselves is the coordinated rhythm of tones and motions" (Meyer-Kalkus 168). This coordination happens when we as readers connect bodily to the rhythms poets create through verse as we both hear and/or associate sound. As this synchronization happens, poets essentially harmonize with the reading audience. Mari Riess Jones in her research into Dynamic Attending Theory claims that "regular (versus irregular)

rhythms elicit anticipatory attending that targets narrower, more focused, bursts of attentional energy” (327). In this moment of synchronization, the audience’s attention becomes more focused on melodies, which, according to Jones, “project a series of spacelike distances over time, meaning that they may be experienced as pitch motion” (327). In theory, the audience’s attentional impulse is quite possibly connecting to the poet’s very own in these kinesthetic moments, uniting the poet and audience not only through focus but also sound and rhythm.

Oliver Sacks suggested that this relationship between auditory and motor systems seems consistently universal for humans, and contemporary cognitive research from the University of California, San Francisco, shows the importance of sound in brain activity and speech perception and this research paired with my inquiry could lead us toward new investigations beyond literary studies into neurodiversity research. In *Musicophilia* (2007), Sacks claims that “research has now shown that so-called responses to rhythm actually *precede* the external beat,” adding that we “anticipate the beat, we get rhythmic patterns as soon as we hear them, and we establish internal models or templates of them,” which are “astonishingly precise and stable” (240; emphasis original). This notion that we internalize templates of rhythm patterns also holds for meter.<sup>9</sup> Sacks claims that brain imaging research shows that “listening to music or imagining it, even without any overt movement or keeping time, activates motor cortex and subcortical motor

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<sup>9</sup> See Yulia Oganian and Edward F. Chang’s “A Speech Envelope Landmark for Syllable Encoding in Human Superior Temporal Gyrus.” *Science Advances*, vol. 5, no. 11, 2019, pp. 1-13. This study was discussed during Jon Hamilton’s *All Things Considered* segment on NPR titled “The Loudness of Vowels Helps the Brain Break Down Speech into Syl-La-Bles” on November 20, 2019. For Hamilton’s brief article of the findings and a discussion with the researchers involved in the study, visit [www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2019/11/20/780988618/the-loudness-of-vowels-helps-the-brain-break-down-speech-into-syl-la-bles](http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2019/11/20/780988618/the-loudness-of-vowels-helps-the-brain-break-down-speech-into-syl-la-bles).

systems, too,” and even “the imagination of music, of rhythm, may be as potent, neurally, as actually listening to it” (241). Recent research “provide[s] neurophysiological evidence for the . . . cognitive representation of the syllabic structure of speech,” and “detection of the most informative portions of the speech signal has been shown behaviorally” (Oganian and Chang 6). In a video posted on NPR in November 2019, Yulia Oganian and Edward F. Chang explain their study’s findings that “the brain could tell whether a vowel was stressed or unstressed” using a generated audio clip from William Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 18” (“Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer’s Day?”):

As you listen to speech, [a] dedicated brain area follows the overall *intensity of speech*, responding whenever speech rapidly gets louder, at *acoustic onsets*. Acoustic onsets co-occur with stressed vowel onsets. This neural code thus provides the basis for the perception of speech rhythm. (Oganian and Chang qtd. in Hamilton; emphasis original)

Oganian and Chang’s study reveals that “[t]he brain analyzes changes in sound volume to detect syllables and make sense of speech” (Hamilton). These connections between sound and movement and sound volume and syllables highlight the cognitive and motor influence of the sound of poetry, and thinking further about Wordsworth’s psychosonicmotion might lead us toward new understandings in autism studies for future work.

Sacks also writes about the power of rhythm, and I explore the rhythmic power of poetry by considering recitation, modulation, and elocution and the effects of the reproduction of sound and the compulsiveness of the reproduction of it on Wordsworth’s listening audience. Sacks claims that rhythm “turns listeners into participants,” making “listening active and motoric” and “synchroniz[ing] the brains and minds . . . of all who participate” (244-45). Such participation through rhythm “binds together the individual nervous systems of a human community,” which

suggests that the public recitation of verse served a political purpose, as the body politic's collective experience of verse had consequences beyond the aesthetic (Sacks 247).

Theories of hearing science that flourished during the Romantic period anticipate findings such as Sacks's and offer a new way of approaching Wordsworth's understanding of the effect of the rhythm of verse. These theories call for a deeper understanding of close listening particularly regarding how Wordsworth composed poetry in literal soundscapes, recited his work, shaped it formally with the acoustics of specific speech sounds in mind, developed sonorous figurative soundscapes, and directed the attention of his audience toward or away from some political motive. Research shows that the inner ear was important in terms of perception, and that the act of listening itself could be sublime, but no authoritative philosophy of hearing or sound existed in this period. Several viewpoints circulated in Britain and France by way of translations and lectures, and the English texts that were in circulation focused more broadly on the ear in terms of anatomy and physiology and on demonstrating "the role of God in the creation and workings of nature" (Gouk and Sykes 518). This thinking offers a way into Wordsworth's poetry.<sup>10</sup> Theories circulated about harmonics, the power of music, acoustics, perception and the brain, the nerves, the soul, vibrations, the movement of sound, good taste, judgment, pleasure, and the connections between the psychological and physical (Gouk and Sykes 507-45). In the flurry of wide-ranging viewpoints regarding the ear, sound, music, and the body, English natural philosopher Benjamin Martin and French surgeon Claude-Nicolas Le Cat agreed that the "auditory mechanism" was paramount in "listening processes," and both intellectuals worked on "auditory psychology" and its function during this time (Gouk and Sykes

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<sup>10</sup> See Romans 10:17 and Hebrews 11:1.



507). Le Cat focused on “hearing science as a discipline of time and space,” and Martin considered hearing “as mainly related to the ‘science of music’” (Gouk and Sykes 510). While the two had different reputations and interests in hearing and hearing science, each “acknowledged the relationship between sound and the creation of music (and of *human sentiment*),” maintaining that “the cochlea was the most distinctive element in the mechanical ear” (Gouk and Sykes 512; emphasis added). Their theories opposed “emerging Enlightenment theory that musical intelligence . . . [was] cultivated through abstract mathematical study alone” (Gouk and Sykes 513). For Le Cat and Martin, “hearing is considered central to the sensation of tasteful music” and was powerful for the transmission of knowledge (Gouk and Sykes 513-14). Martin’s writing on sound and hearing followed Francis Bacon’s experiential method of “relying on sense experiences mediated through instruments as a basis for scientific explanation” and suggests that “the nature of sound, its musical properties, different musical instruments, the organ of speech, and the faculty of hearing” can be grouped into the study of acoustics,

‘which treats the philosophy, or doctrine of sounds, and of the constitution of the organ of hearing, which is placed in the ear, by which those sounds are rendered audible, or sensible to us, under their different affections and circumstances.’ (qtd. in Gouk and Sykes 534)

Considering acoustics and psychoacoustics, I treat Wordsworth’s poetry as a similar instrument—a musical one—that we can listen to and decode for the transmission of knowledge that functions through time and space.

Theodor Adorno writes about decoding music in *Sound Figures* and argues that this decoding depends on the “reflexive powers of the methods of analyzing music itself and their relation to the intellectual substance that can be realized in art only by virtue of the technical categories at work in it” (4). While poetry and music are different, the thinking here still stands. All parts of a composition “give . . . formal shape to” and “render . . . visible” the mysterious

“contradiction implicit” in all great compositions, which is “that of the general and the particular,” and therefore demand analysis (Adorno 9-10). To decode Wordsworth’s poetry in this way, I analyze Wordsworth’s possible literal soundscapes and his figurative soundscapes through auditory scene analysis, to survey the sonority of his form by studying the specific speech sounds of his poetry and prose.

In France, the focus on the ear and hearing had to do with “the medical culture of surgery” and was largely impacted “by the shift in medical thinking toward vitalism,” and “the effects of music on the nervous body became of utmost importance to a new politicized form of musical thinking” (Gouk and Sykes 526-27). French hearing texts emphasized the parts of the ear and the complexity of its structure, and eventually, due to the widespread acceptance of Joseph-Guichard Duverney’s description of the ear and its parts, its function, and its problems, there was a shift at the French Academy of Sciences “away from the anatomical ear toward musical science” and the relationship between light and sound and voice, which led to “the emerging field of musical vitalism” (Gouk and Sykes 532). I connect this thinking about light to my own regarding attention as it relates to sound and voice. In vitalist musical aesthetics, the “body was a mirror of a musical instrument, [a] wondrous set of ‘strings’ which agitated in sympathy to external sensory forces,” much like the aeolian harp (Gouk and Sykes 532-33). Perhaps Shelley was aware of this thinking when he wrote *A Defence of Poetry*, wherein he outlines the principles of synthesis and analysis and claims

Poetry, in a general sense, may be defined to be “the expression of the Imagination”: and poetry is connate with the origin of man. Man is an instrument over which a series of external and internal impressions are driven, like the alternations of an ever-changing wind over an Æolian lyre, which move it by their motion to *ever-changing melody*. But *there is a principle within the human being, and perhaps within all sentient beings, which acts otherwise than in the lyre, and produces not melody alone, but harmony, by an internal adjustment of the sounds or motions thus excited to the impressions which excite them*. It is as if the lyre

*could accommodate its chords to the motions of that which strikes them, in a determined proportion of sound; even as the musician can accommodate his voice to the sound of the lyre. (511; emphasis added)*

Shelley views poetry as innate: it exists naturally within us and has since our origin but seems to exist as a flickering flame, lost to our conscious recollection because of the vast array of complex impressions upon us; for him, it is as though we need poetry to arouse our consciousnesses and rekindle the flame. Shelley's metaphor here is about mutuality and synthesis that allows humankind through poetry to become poets—to become readers-listeners-performers and subjects—and to harmonize in thought by adjusting subjectivity at self-determined intervals brought by sounds or motions, which I correlate to acoustics and psychoacoustics, as, essentially, both acts of reading and writing poetry materialize through hearing and close listening. Seamus Heaney believed that Wordsworth's "poetry reaches into . . . the activity of listening," and it is in this process of Wordsworth being "drawn into himself even as he speaks himself out" that poetic composition happens for him, as in addition to looking steadily at his subject, he listens closely to it (3). In this process, in theory, Wordsworth would have imagined for himself the subject, or his reader-listener-performer, performing the sounds of his verse in the way that he performed them.

Through close listening in such moments, the processing of inner and outer experiences produces poetry. John Stuart Mill believed poets have "'minds of strong organic sensibility,'" in which "'synchronous associations . . . predominate, producing a tendency to conceive things in pictures and *in the concrete*, richly clothed in attributes and circumstances, a mental habit which is commonly called Imagination'" (qtd. in Robson 427; emphasis added). In this process of imagination, per Mill, is the power of "self-observation" (Robson 432). Such self-observation through these inner and outer moments is more than cerebral; it is also physical, as poets

experience sensation and emotion simultaneously (Robson 426). The “natural poet,” as per Mill, is “untrained in mind but strong in feeling,” and “in him[,] sensations call up emotions immediately, so that the ideas connected with the sensations are welded to the ideas connected with the emotions” (Robson 426). Poets, in Mill’s view, are more attuned to experience, and because they are so receptive, they can process physical and mental environments simultaneously, consciously, and in this process, they can concretize the ineffable by bringing unsymbolized thought, which is debatable but possible, to the tongue. Considering Mill’s ideas alongside of Shelley’s and S. Heaney’s, both reading and writing poetry allow for attentively observing the mind at work in preserving these simultaneous associations and this parallel processing in these moments that move the reader/poet from a prelingual to a lingual state, and this transition arises from listening and hearing whether to material or imagined sound. Those with poetic sensibility are recognizing these moments of simultaneity through powerful feeling because they listen in, and Mill suggests that this thought tinged with feeling results in poetry, which he claims is overheard. Perhaps having stronger organic sensibility results in hearing sounds unheard by the inattentive ear or in being more attentive to the auditory imagination and the interpretive possibilities of psychoacoustics.

Close listening in composing verse and reading it, I suggest, is a result of recognizing the mind at work through the body—through the Romantic ear—and I record this kind of listening through my inquiry into Wordsworth’s poetry. Communal listening took place between the poet and any audience who might have been attentively hearing the poet’s voice, and I examine audience attention as impacted through the acoustics and psychoacoustics of the recitation. Moments of composition in the public sphere and recitation were intimate for not only a listening audience but also for Wordsworth, as he moved into deep isolation and cliraudience, attentively

listening to his natural outdoor and indoor environments, to sounds both real and imagined, and to sounds inaudible by others. Wordsworth's synchronized walking, speaking, and taking in of experiences while composing and remembering verses all required a great deal of attention, and similar attention is demanded from an audience experiencing the sound of his poetry through synchronization and imagination. Jones reinforces how sound patterns control attention. As listeners "react to sound patterns," she writes, they "seem to 'keep time' effortlessly with the common patterns of speech and music," resulting in the direction and redirection of attention according to rhythms (Jones 317). Jones calls this process entrainment, which, in living beings, describes "a pairing of a *driving rhythm with a driven, biological, rhythm*" (322-23; emphasis original). This synchronizing of driving rhythms and driven biological rhythms happens as we read poetry and listen closely to its sound patterns and the way we respond to them. Because Romantic poetry in its time was "a strongly 'temporal' and oral art—an art realized in time by the voice" (Perkins 656), in this dissertation, I analyze the acoustics and psychoacoustics of Wordsworth's poetry to discover possible effects on the body and the mind of reading in different tones and to consider his work through a stronger association between poetry and music—and to try to hear and preserve, as accurately as I can, the sound of his voice. In this study of Wordsworth's poetry, I aim to inform our understanding of the Romantic-era conception of the influence of sound on attention.

In this project, I argue for engagement with Romantic poetry using the period's style of recitation by imaginatively and critically reciting and listening to Wordsworth's poems that records show he would have recited for others to hear, including *The Prelude* of 1805 and *Peter Bell, a Tale in Verse*. I also analyze the significance of lyrics treating the effects of audition, such

as “On the Power of Sound,” to Wordsworth’s canon in response to Chandler’s thinking about “the electric life” that exists in language.

In my investigation into this field of inquiry, I analyze and interpret specific speech sounds in the poetry. Mullin et al. review the acoustics of specific speech sounds (i.e., vowel variations, consonant articulations, glide and liquid consonants, nasal consonants, fricative consonants, stop consonants, coarticulation) and give an overview of how they are made and what their acoustic characteristics are (129-67). With this understanding in mind, I examine the nature of Wordsworth’s speech through a close analysis of his language and sound preferences through his phonetic diction.

I critique possible sound produced during original Wordsworthian recitations and posit the potential acoustics of reader-listener-performer recitations. I also examine possible literal soundscapes where Wordsworth’s poetry might have been recited during the Romantic period as well as the inscribed figurative soundscapes within the poems and the actual and probable effects of these various soundscapes on listening audiences as well as on Wordsworth himself using auditory scene analysis. Albert Bregman defines the goal of auditory scene analysis as “the recovery of separate descriptions of each separate thing in the environment” (9). In this process, sound mixtures are disentangled to recover individual sounds. For the literal soundscapes, I trace to my best ability the exact locations where Wordsworth’s documented recitations occurred. I also consider potential sound events that might have occurred in history in such physical locations that would have possibly psychically affected Wordsworth during his recitations in those locales.

For the figurative soundscapes, I map sonic settings and sound events as they occur in the texts as well as movement between one to the next. In addition to what is present in these sonic

settings, I consider what is absent in these settings and events that might have been present in thought for the poet. R. Murray Schafer in his *The Tuning of the World* includes several options for mapping soundscapes; in my own mapping, I pay close attention to concentrated sound figures, prosodic features, or accented linguistic representations to determine where emphases have been placed. In my inquiry into the acoustic loci of “On the Power of Sound,” “The Idiot Boy,” *The Prelude* of 1805, and *Peter Bell, a Tale in Verse*, I examine layered sounds to see if there are patterns of organization or perceptual patterns located within these texts. I disentangle the synthesized soundscapes to study strands of sounds, single sounds, rhythmic elements, poetic meter, and sounds inaudible, as the soundscapes of the poetry could possibly inform us about Wordsworth’s attention, his hearing and listening abilities, his philosophies, and his rhetorical purposes.

That Wordsworth recited his work at times to an actual listening audience and that we have records of what these recitations were like suggest that he anticipated the rhetorical velocity of his acoustic messages. Jim Ridolfo and Dànielle Nicole DeVoss define rhetorical velocity as “a conscious rhetorical concern for distance, travel, speed, and time, pertaining specifically to theorizing instances of strategic appropriation by a third party” (“Composing for Recomposition . . .”). I consider the possibilities for how Wordsworth’s poetry might have traveled and conveyed meaning both within and beyond his local community because of his acoustic delivery and the psychoacoustic possibilities he created in auditory scenes both real and imagined. Through an understanding of rhetorical velocity, we can reimagine the sonic possibilities of Wordsworth’s poems in the past for future recitation, translation, performance, reception, and analytical study. We can envision how others might have engaged Wordsworth’s work across distances, in different spaces and places, and in diverse languages and cultures—and how others

might engage it in the future—by listening into the past. These documented moments of listening call for an examination of elocution in his poetry and the direction of audience attention and his own through literal and figurative sound in both its physical and psychical properties.

In chapter one, I posit a mode for understanding poetic sound in theory and practice during the Romantic period, an epoch notable for shifting thought away from natural philosophy toward critical stances undertaken using more specialized systems of science. I envision a reading of Wordsworth’s poetry that examines in his poetic doctrine and poetry a shift toward scientific specialization. Using a diachronic approach to sound, I claim that poetry, and particularly Wordsworth’s poetry in Romantic-era England, should be analyzed through the framework of acoustics and psychoacoustics. To advance this claim, I rely on modern cognitive poetics and historical English linguistics and consider the significance of Wordsworth’s lyrics treating the effects of audition on his literary doctrine. I engage with Chandler’s claim that

the vitalist ‘electricity’ that appears in some famous poetry of the Romantic period had something to do with . . . [a] new attention to the *sound of words*, with a new way of hearing sounds in relation to a new understanding of the mind as an affective domain. (emphasis added)

I examine potential sonic environments in “Stanzas on the Power of Sound” and examine select auditory scenes. To this end, I analyze the physical sounds of its soundscape when read aloud and the psychological and cognitive sound possibilities embedded in the soundscape. To survey the sonority of Wordsworth’s linguistic structures, I study select acoustic speech sounds of his poetry and their possible perceptual qualities. I conclude by proposing that Wordsworth anticipated a particular interpretive community for his poetry and a pedagogical role for poets in the social sphere. Overall, I reinforce my argument that understanding Wordsworth’s poetry as audio is essential to the historical meaning and effects of his poetry and poetics.



In chapter two, I argue for a theory of reading and understanding Wordsworth's poetry that acknowledges a pragmatic, local context surrounding his poetic composition process as a substantial thread in the fabric of not only his verse composition but also how others might have received it in the Romantic period and in the present. Through a consideration of both post-Enlightenment theories of attention and distraction and modern-day cognitive science and psychophysics, I further my claims about hearing, acoustics, psychoacoustics, and speech from the previous chapter and conceptualize how Wordsworth, during composition and recitation, sought to engage, hold, and direct his audience's attention. I attempt in my work to move beyond unidimensional notions of poetic modality in print toward experiencing poetry through aural modes, as others experienced poems in the Romantic period as Wordsworth composed them, recited them, and shared them with others based on the evidence of contemporary records of his recitations. I acknowledge Elfenbein's notion of "percussive Romanticism, in which a pounding regularity of meter does the work of voice" (195), and draw from elocutionary science to consider possibilities for Wordsworth's live delivery, linking his manner of recitation to John Thelwall's philosophies and my own theoretical approach. I entertain the likelihood that Wordsworth undertook both a pedagogical and bardic role as a poet in the social sphere through a brief analysis of "Mutability"; and through my reading of "The Idiot Boy," I suggest that Wordsworth reimagined notions of idiocy as the possession of a refined sensibility and anticipated an inclusive interpretive community for his poetry.

I relate Wordsworth's idea of circumambience to what Jonathan Kramnick terms the "physical surround" in chapter three (*Paper Minds*, 59). I consider Wordsworth's recitation of the poem to Coleridge on the grounds of Coleorton, near Ashby de la Zouch, and make a claim about the layered consciousnesses represented in *The Prelude* and construct a theory of the

imagination that considers Wordsworth's text and its contribution to Coleridge's definition of the primary and secondary imagination. I engage with Erin McMullen and Jenny R. Saffran to consider possible developmental relationships between music and language for learning and memory as these links emerge throughout *The Prelude* of 1805, and I analyze Wordsworth's musical and linguistic processes in book two on these terms. Later in the chapter, I focus on book nine, Residence in France, and also consider book ten, Residence in France and French Revolution, to examine how Wordsworth treats sound in these books and how it changes in the later revisions of the work. In my review, I evaluate Wordsworth's multiple revisions as potential sound events/sound figures. I consider Sophia Rosenfeld's survey of the histories of sound and the connection between auditory and political imaginations. She writes about the history of hearing and its relationship to modern democratic politics, focusing specifically on "the constitutional protection of free speech" at the beginning of the French Revolution and its cultural and physiological effects (Rosenfeld 317). I suggest the political implications of clairaudience for both Wordsworth and his audience in his context and ours and argue for the importance of examining auditory attention and imagination. Throughout, I examine acoustic environments, i.e., possible literal and figurative soundscapes, located in the 1805 version, and in locations where these texts might have been recited, acoustically or psychoacoustically, and analyze select auditory scenes to look closely at not only the acoustic environments made possible by sound imagery but also those sonic environments populated by certain linguistic/speech sounds, dialogisms, etc.

To complement chapter three and its focus on Wordsworth's biographical details, in chapter four, I forgo such biographical considerations and examine how my position holds up in practice in *Peter Bell, a Tale in Verse*. I argue that this poem illustrates how language and formal

narrative structure leverage affective forces of sounds when we listen closely. I propose a theory of reading that pays close attention to the embodied situation that Wordsworth constructs through his narrative structure. With consideration given to the ontic condition of nature, I make an argument for the presence of nature (or natures) and audience embodiment that allows for variability in perception, as these presences and bodies exist in many forms with diverse capabilities; they did so in Wordsworth's moment, and they do so now, so variations in how we define hearing and listening with regard to poetic sound must be considered. Our literary use of such terms demands revision for inclusivity: the audible world exists differently for everyone. With a consideration of affordances in mind, I examine the 1819 first edition of Wordsworth's narrative poem. In this investigation, I observe the context of *Peter Bell*'s publication history through its paratexts, treating in my study reception, critical reviews, parodies, and authorial commentary, as such material for all intents and purposes functions as sound events/sound figures. I once more engage with Rosenfeld's work because in it, she discusses hearing and its relation to acoustic environments. Thematic, political, and linguistic sonic environments (i.e., literal and figurative soundscapes) are possible within this narrative poem, and attending specifically to recitations, physical acoustics, and psychoacoustics, I imagine auditory scenes, acoustic ecologies, and ways of knowing these soundscapes could make possible. I argue that the narrative form of *Peter Bell* functions as referential and nonreferential sound art with aesthetic implications.

This research on the whole has implications for how we view the Romantic period, as this kind of contextual return to originary historical sonic events can teach us more about the material bodies engaging or not engaging in these spaces. By reconceiving Romantic recitation and Wordsworth's processes and circles, we "assume material bodies in their textual manifestations,"

according to Mark Lussier, and we also assume textual manifestations of material bodies (104). In these acts, we become more aware of the pervasiveness of aurality and its historical tendency to shun, silence, misrepresent, and even erase the perceptual difference that no doubt existed.

Research into sound in the Romantic ear has real-world implications for today as well as for the future. It is important to learn how to listen and how to think, how to pay close attention, and how the body/the mind can be agitated through rhythmic impulses. In my project, I revise the contemporary research on heavy inner dialogue, as that has fueled my interest in reconstructing Wordsworth's voice. I wholeheartedly acknowledge the practical importance of this project as well as its literary, scholarly, and pedagogical significance. Because the ear connects the physical to the psychological, a study of sound in this way reveals new insights into poetry. My goals for this research are to emphasize how Romantic poetry—and all poetry—serves as a portal for close attention; to examine sonic literal and figurative landscapes and their value; to explore how figures of sound and/or silence and their phonetic and semantic aspects relate to emotion and imagination in important ways to perpetuate orality amid a growing print culture and to provoke readerly engagement and community; and to reconstruct the audible from the textual data in Wordsworth's poetry. My work reinforces poetry's ability to echo eloquence in the ear while simultaneously stirring thought and makes a case for listening to Wordsworth's poetry as audio. Wordsworth studies re-impress the wonder of sound in print before it became more technologically overtaken and recorded. This research could also prove useful for further investigations of psychosonicmotion and affective fluctuations, which might be helpful in autism therapy or for inquiries into perception in the future for the neurotypical and neurodiverse. But I am a scholar of neither audio nor autism: I am a scholar of poetry. Therefore, at the very least, I aim in this dissertation to ennoble a "wise passiveness."

## CHAPTER 1

### HEARING AND LISTENING TO WORDSWORTH

According to Andrew Elfenbein, percussive Romanticism was a successful tradition and was maintained in schools through oral recitation until the early nineteenth century when “the naked power of speech was long gone,” and it became understood that “literature was not literature until it was in print” (44). Elfenbein acknowledges the importance of “reading aloud” during this time, but he also insists that, barring a few exceptions (i.e., Samuel Taylor Coleridge), “it usually happened only after a work had been printed” (44). Even now, academic Romantic scholarship seems to dismiss the expressive, chanting style of recitation favored and defended by the poets of this period for its uncertainties. However, imagining these uncertainties—in pronunciation, in tonality, in inflection, in dramatic expression, in the breaking of the voice, etc.—is critical to understanding the period and its poetry’s relationship to language and thought and affect and audience.

It is important to use auditory intuition to extract acoustic presences from the print materials of Romantic poetry. This extraction of poetic sound occurs during oral recitations or auditory translations, and these practices, for the most part, are not newfangled. Auditory information transferred through oral recitations and auditory translations generates possible acoustic presences that both pervade and enhance the reading and meaning-making experience. This much we certainly know. The processing of auditory information in poetry offers an inventive approach to poetic sound when it recognizes the physiological, physical, and psychological powers of hearing and listening at work during this complex cognitive experience.

Historical insights into sound, cognitive poetics, and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English linguistics provide a nuanced framework for analyzing the intuitive perception of possible acoustic events in poetry through its speech sounds as well as for understanding the historical and present-day performances of poetry as linguistic recitations capable of transfusing physiological affect. Though the performance of poetry is not a topic treated fully here, it is the vehicle for thinking through Romantic audition.

Listening for the possibilities of sound in Romantic poetry, semantics aside, recasts the verse as audio, and the printed text becomes othered insofar as the words on the page materialize beyond the alphabetic text. Audition becomes guided by the multifarious sonic linguistic textures as they manifest themselves in the body—on the tongue—not the search for content meaning, and these textures enhance analysis because to examine them in all their possibilities requires the acknowledgment of a relationship between a regulating poet and an influenced reader-listener-performer, a substantialized duo who might have competing agendas for and reactions to the language of the poem. Therefore, realizing sound possibilities by analyzing poetry as audio reshapes our theoretical understanding of poets and poetics and reinforces poetry as a modern somaesthetic-affective object. This realization shifts the focus away from the rush to seize at once the poem's semantic content, which, at times, due to its referential nature overpowers nonreferential sonic possibilities. In postponing analytical attention to the referential semantic content, the attention swings more toward the careful engagement with and physical possession of the language of poetry to apprehend the sense, an embodied experience created by the poet to arrest the reader-listener-performer, to authorize feeling, and to educate the passions through sound. This engagement appreciates and reimagines Romantic-era recitation as a valuable method for engaging with the poetry of the period.

William Wordsworth composed his literary doctrine with a prominent interest in the possibilities of sound for his poetry and its effects. He informed his attentive reader of his poetic composition style and intention throughout his life, through prefaces, letters, and other means, to teach those who might assume that role how his poetry should be read and experienced. This fine-tuning of experience is about the affective embodiment of his verse. He instructs his reader to contribute to the poetic project by hearing and listening, and if the reader hears and listens closely to him, his experiment will be successful because the outcome for his reader will be embodied emotion. He realized the power of sound as an asset in his poetics and defended his poem “On the Power of Sound” in a letter to Alexander Dyce in 1837:

‘I cannot call to mind a reason why you should not think some passages in “The Power of Sound” equal to anything I have produced; when first printed in *Yarrow Revisited* [1835], I placed it at the end of the Volume, and in the last edition of my poems [1836-7], at the close of the *Poems of Imagination*, indicating thereby my *own* opinion of it.’ (qtd. in Gill 725; emphasis original)

Taking an instructive tone in this letter, Wordsworth reinforces the significance of his poem to his volume by discussing its emphatic placement. As a poem rhetorically placed at the “end,” “in the last edition,” and “at the close,” the attentive, listening reader hears him loud and clear: the poem is important and warrants memorable placement. I suggest that the poem’s attention to sound contributed to its significance for Wordsworth in that the physical sounds of its soundscape when read aloud and the psychological sound possibilities and perceptual qualities embedded in the soundscape accomplished his purpose to affect his reader. Because he valued this work, and because he capitalized on the power of sound in achieving an affective response from his reader, it is important to analyze the acoustics and psychoacoustics of Wordsworth’s poetry through a Romantic-era conception of the influence of sound.

In this chapter, I posit a mode for understanding poetic sound in theory and practice during the Romantic period, an epoch notable for shifting thought away from natural philosophy toward critical stances undertaken using more specialized systems of science. Richard Yeo discusses this move in more detail:

Before about 1760 the scope and method of natural philosophy seemed secure; it was defined broadly as an enquiry into the phenomena and powers of nature, and as such it had enjoyed a reputation as the ‘handmaiden’ of theology, the ‘queen’ of the sciences, from the high middle ages. By the 1830s, however, the subject was being radically transformed and superseded: the term ‘scientist’ had been coined, by . . . [William] Whewell, and the demise of the earlier natural philosophy was well underway.<sup>11</sup>

Because this shift is evident in the period, I envision a reading of Wordsworth’s poetry that examines in his poetic doctrine and poetry a similar shift toward scientific specialization. Using a diachronic approach to sound, I claim that poetry, and particularly Wordsworth’s poetry in Romantic-era England, should be analyzed through the framework of acoustics and psychoacoustics. To advance this claim, I rely on select theoretical underpinnings from modern cognitive poetics and historical English linguistics and consider the significance of Wordsworth’s lyrics treating the effects of audition on his literary doctrine. I engage with James Chandler’s claim that

the vitalist ‘electricity’ that appears in some famous poetry of the Romantic period had something to do with . . . [a] new attention to the *sound of words, with a new way of hearing sounds in relation to a new understanding of the mind as an affective domain*. (“The ‘Power of Sound’ and the Great Scheme of Things: Wordsworth Listens to Wordsworth”; emphasis added)

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<sup>11</sup> Encyclopedias during the 1770s “were pointing readers from a short entry on ‘natural philosophy’ to detailed articles on the various physical sciences,” and “by 1800 they were breaking ‘natural history’ into biology, . . . zoology, physiology, geology, and comparative anatomy” (Yeo); for more on the unraveling of natural philosophy, see Richard Yeo’s “Natural Philosophy (Science).” *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age*. Oxford UP, 2009. *Oxford Reference*.  
[www.oxfordreference.com.libdata.lib.ua.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780199245437.001.0001/acref-9780199245437-e-478](http://www.oxfordreference.com.libdata.lib.ua.edu/view/10.1093/acref/9780199245437.001.0001/acref-9780199245437-e-478).



I examine potential sonic environments in “Stanzas on the Power of Sound” and examine select auditory scenes. To this end, I analyze the physical sounds of its soundscape when read aloud and the psychological and cognitive sound possibilities embedded in the soundscape. To survey the sonority of Wordsworth’s linguistic structures, I study select acoustic speech sounds of his poetry and their possible perceptual qualities. I conclude by proposing that Wordsworth anticipated a particular interpretive community for his poetry and a pedagogical role for poets in the social sphere. Overall, I argue that understanding Wordsworth’s poetry as audio is essential to the historical meaning and effects of his poetry and poetics.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was accepted that along with analytical practices related to vision, sound was an important area of research that could supply significant information to disparate fields of inquiry. Valuable aural information could come from the use of scientific instruments, and one such example of this fact, that “pitches generated by labial and reed pipes in nineteenth-century laboratories conveyed the necessary data for the calculation of the speed of sound through air and other gases,” has been pointed out by Alexandra Hui et al. (2-3). Reciprocal engagements between multiple interested parties in fields of music and science also led to further “specialization and separation of scientific disciplines” that relied on sound for analytical purposes (Hui et al. 6). In the field of medicine, for instance, physician practices trusted the aural information instruments could yield, as Jens Lachmund’s research into auscultation and the codification of auscultation codes shows. Though interpretations of lung sounds called for negotiation, these practices were rooted in local, constructed contexts; Lachmund writes that with the rise of this diagnostic practice, which took place after the stethoscope was invented in 1816, “the auditory became viewed as a distinctive sphere of perception and functioned as the nexus of specific perceptual practices” (420). Because these

lung sounds enabled the physician practicing this technique to analyze the body using “a grid of more or less stabilized perceptual and interpretative categories,” codification systems worked to create an organized epistemic system, which “created order in and through the auditory” and “transformed fleeting auditory experiences into a world of communicable signs and meanings” (Lachmund 420). The same kind of organized epistemic system can be generated if we analyze the sounds of Wordsworth’s poetry using a grid of perceptual and interpretative categories drawn from an understanding of sound, which includes hearing and listening, during his time and ours.

Theories about the mechanical structure of the ear and the physics of sound during the Romantic period suggest how Wordsworth might have understood hearing physical sounds and perceiving psychical sounds in different textual circumstances and how he factored that into his poetics to achieve a desired audience response. In 1799, Everard Home presented a lecture on the *membrana tympani* (i.e., the ear drum) that suggested the cultivation of the ear was possible. Home insisted that “an ear, which upon the first trials seemed unfit to receive accurate perceptions of sounds, shall, by early and constant application, be rendered tolerably correct, but never can attain excellence” (13). He argued that defects in the ear could result from “a confusion of sounds” in the ear, caused by a “radiated muscle” of the *membrana tympani*, but that from these defects, one could fully recover (Home 15). The defective ear could be improved, and right hearing could result from proper training in the perception of sounds, an idea Wordsworth likely considered in an ode on the power of sound wherein the speaker addresses the anatomical ear and proclaims its value as a complicated and important organ.

Hearing scientists of the eighteenth century recognized sound as instrumental in communicating knowledge, and natural philosophers and surgeons offered lectures in both

England and France on the ear and auditory perception.<sup>12</sup> Lecturers Benjamin Martin and Claude-Nicolas Le Cat were intermediaries underscoring the complexity of the anatomical ear and auditory processing. Both intellectuals worked on “auditory psychology” and its function during this time and maintained that “the cochlea was the most distinctive element in the mechanical ear” (Gouk and Sykes 507, 512). Le Cat focused on the medical culture of surgery and “hearing science as a discipline of time and space”; Martin considered hearing “as mainly related to the ‘science of music’” (Gouk and Sykes 510). Le Cat believed that ““of all the Senses[,] . . . Hearing is that which gives Man a preheminance [*sic*] above all other Animals with respect to Harmony,”” and no other sense exists ““which causes in him such Emotions”” (qtd. in Gouk and Sykes 537). That humanity could, through the faculty of hearing, perceive sound accurately and hear harmony confirmed its excellence and distinguished it from other forms deemed lower. For Martin, hearing music was a powerful experience because the minds and passions of men could be affected in the process (Gouk and Sykes 537). The two had very different reputations and interests in hearing and hearing science, but each “acknowledged the relationship between sound and the creation of music (and of *human sentiment*)” (Gouk and Sykes 512; emphasis added). They agreed that the anatomical ear was a powerful sense organ remarkable for the transmission of sound knowledge both physiologically and aesthetically.

Other lecturers treated the anatomical ear and its hearing processes less mechanically and began to speculate on acoustics more philosophically (Gouk and Sykes 515). In England, one such public speaker was Henry Moyes, who gave a series of lectures at the Newcastle Literary

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<sup>12</sup> For a thorough historical review of thought related to Enlightenment auditory physiology in Britain and France, see Gouk, Penelope, and Ingrid Sykes. “Hearing Science in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Britain and France.” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Applied Sciences*, vol. 66, no. 4, 2010, pp. 507-45.

and Philosophical Society around 1795 “devoted to sound, echo, melody, and harmony, including the mechanism of the ear, musical sounds, music and the mind, and the influence of music on the human system” (Gouk and Sykes 521). In France, eventually, due to the widespread acceptance of Joseph-Guichard Duverney’s description of the ear and its parts, its function, and its problems, there was a shift at the French Academy of Sciences “away from the anatomical ear toward musical science” (Gouk and Sykes 532). The focus on the ear and hearing was largely impacted by a shift toward theories of vitalist musical aesthetics, which viewed the body as “a mirror of a musical instrument, [a] wondrous set of ‘strings’ which agitated in sympathy to external sensory forces” (Gouk and Sykes 532-33). Music’s effects on the body became an important topic for debate, but the focus on these effects for some time circumvented the auditory nerves’ connection to the mind.

Even in the late eighteenth century, the relationship between hearing and processing sound in the mind was considered through a late seventeenth-century perspective. A prominent theory in this perspective was constructed by Thomas Willis and involved the attempt “to understand perception and response to musical sound as a process from the initial propagation of sound, to its reception and interpretation by the brain” (Gouk and Sykes 522). Willis’s concern with the originary moment of sound, its transmission, its mental reception, and its construal was provocative because it focused on the understanding of the mind as soul. In Willis’s interpretation,

an extremely subtle spirit . . . flowed through the nerves, a material substance that was the instrument of the rational soul or mind and was what he called the sensible soul. This spirit was produced from the blood and stored in the brain, flowing inwards as the apprehension of sensible things was performed, or flowing outwards to instigate locomotion in the body. (Gouk and Sykes 522)

In this process, Willis's "subtle spirit" in the body both reacted to perceived external sound and motion and created progressive motion in the body as a result. Willis's theory placed confidence in an understanding of nerves as devices of arousal that operated within the mind as soul.

This theory of perception by which external motions come into contact with the nerves to create sensation was accepted, but controversy surrounding the details of this understanding of nerves followed. Disagreement during the eighteenth century centered on "whether the nerves were hollow tubes filled with spirits that transmitted these external sense impressions, or whether they were solid fibers whose finer parts were set in motion by this action" (Gouk and Sykes 522). Isaac Newton's *Opticks* was published during this debate, and he suggested that sound was "produced by the vibration of an incredibly fine, elastic, and subtle medium that fills the universe, motions that were propagated through" solid, clear, and constant "capillamenta of those nerves into the place of sensation" (Gouk and Sykes 523). Newton's contribution to the debate identified the possibility of hair-like nerve fibers set in motion by external vibrations in the universe, termed a "universal ether," a medium that Newton posited "might serve to perform the actions of the will" (Gouk and Sykes 523). Newton's universal ether hints at the possibility of the divine as existing in the universe through sound, a rustling evident through the engagement of mind and nature. This Romantic thinking led to George Cheyne's suggestion that nerves were solid springy bundles that were also elastic, which "depend on the actions of the spirits for their responsiveness, the healthy body being like a musical instrument that properly responds to the touch of the player (i.e., the soul)" (Gouk and Sykes 523). Influenced by Newton, Cheyne's understanding enlarged others' contributions leading to new thought about the power of music in altering mood, the ability to tune and refine the organ of hearing, and notions of sensibility, pleasure, and taste. While moral philosophy as a system was concerned with "the

principle that ideas were generated from external sense impressions discerned from mental faculties,” some foundational texts of this system omitted specific discussions on the anatomical ear and sound transmission and instead focused on the faculties of the human mind in general (Gouk and Sykes 525).

Nevertheless, knowledge of the anatomical ear became a way to understand the psychological realms associated with the faculty of hearing. David Hartley’s system connected the realm of physical sound and hearing with the psychological and relied on Newtonian speculations, which reinforced

that a subtle ether resided in the (solid) nerves, the spinal marrow, and brain, and it was through the vibrations of this substance that impressions were made upon the mind, a process which followed Locke’s doctrine of association as complex ideas were built up from initially simple sensations. (Gouk and Sykes 525-26)

What stands out in Hartley’s theory of vibrations is that sounds are characterized according to agreeability and disagreeability in terms of association. In this way, ideas are the result of audible impressions, and the discernment of harmony in sounds or of the lack thereof could, based on association, result in dissimilar judgments to delineate differences in tastes (Gouk and Sykes 526). The creation of taste is a foundational principle in Wordsworth’s poetics that links him directly to Hartley, and his claim in the “Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*” that “by the act of writing in verse an Author makes a formal engagement that he will gratify certain known habits of association” is convincing evidence that connects his poetics to associationist psychology (596). However, as Theodore L. Huguelet and others explain, it is impossible to know how much on Hartleyan psychology Wordsworth’s *oeuvre* relied.

John Hayden claims that Hartley’s influence on Wordsworth’s poetry is currently “widely accepted” though “qualified in the direction of Wordsworth’s transcendental interests” and maintained as plausible though “Hartley’s wholesale disparagement of the liberal arts,

including poetry,” is taken into consideration (“Wordsworth, Hartley, and the Revisionists” 94, 100). He maintains that the evidence for influence, however, has been sometimes “exaggerated” and claims that other sources prior to and during the eighteenth century, such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, David Hume, etc., could be responsible for Wordsworth’s associationist tendencies (Hayden, “Wordsworth, Hartley, and the Revisionists” 95, 98).<sup>13</sup> Wordsworth was, according to Hayden, grappling with associationist psychology even if his contending with it was, unlike Coleridge’s, unsystematic and overlapping theoretically. Hayden acknowledges that Wordsworth seems at once “both a sensationalist and a transcendentalist,” negotiating the mind as “both active *and* passive” (“Wordsworth, Hartley, and the Revisionists” 99). To this end, Hayden not only cites associationist passages in Wordsworth’s poetry but also quotes selections that challenge “Hartley’s central theory of mental passivity,” such as the following lines, 102-06, from “Tintern Abbey”:

‘Therefore am I still  
A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
And mountains; and of all that we behold  
From this green earth; of all the mighty world  
Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,  
And what perceive.’ (qtd. in “Wordsworth, Hartley, and the Revisionists” 109).

Overall, Hayden examines Wordsworth as a thinker in his own right instead of through the associationist lens or through the mind of Coleridge.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> While Hayden briefly mentions Coleridge and William Godwin as influential contributors to Wordsworth’s thinking, William Ulmer extends Hayden’s examination by investigating Wordsworth’s belief in the doctrine of philosophical necessity. For more, see “William Wordsworth and Philosophical Necessity.” *Studies in Philology*, vol. 110, no. 1, 2013, pp. 168-98.

<sup>14</sup> The overlapping of ideas available in Wordsworth’s thinking is further clarified through William Hatherell’s treatment of the linguistic ideas found within the “Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*.” Hatherell explores the complexities involved in synthesizing Locke’s linguistic articulations with Hartley’s associationism for both Wordsworth and Coleridge. For more, see

Such theoretical history makes a relevant contribution to the understanding of the Romantic ear in that Wordsworth's literary doctrine can be viewed as an experiment that at its core is founded on the relationship between audible impressions and the association of ideas.<sup>15</sup> While others have investigated Wordsworth's work through Hartley's framework, I draw from the period's philosophical and scientific discourse a synthesized viewpoint of sound and hearing apparent in his historical moment as well as a more modern understanding of physical and psychophysical sound in relation to hearing and the perceptual organization of it. Sound, by its very nature, "its musical properties, different musical instruments, the organ of speech, and the faculty of hearing" can be grouped into the study of acoustics (Gouk and Sykes 534). The philosophy of sounds and the structure of the ear and its parts, "by which . . . sounds are rendered audible, or sensible to us, under their different affections and circumstances," fall under this broad category (qtd. in Gouk and Sykes 534). A complementary field to acoustics is psychoacoustics, or "the study of how humans perceive sound" (Howard and Angus 65). If we understand the scientific background of acoustics and psychoacoustics, as these specializations inform Wordsworth's poetics, we can better understand how he might have been thinking about sound.

Wordsworth acknowledged poetry's and the poet's relationship with science and understood both working together in the construction of knowledge. He writes:

Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science. . . . Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man. If the labours of Men

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"'Words and Things': Locke, Hartley and the Associationist Context for the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*." *Romanticism*, vol. 12, no. 3, Dec. 2006, pp. 223-35.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Mitchell discusses *Lyrical Ballads* as an experiment that readers could repeat, thus designating Wordsworth and Coleridge as creators of a text serving as a medium that would enable readers to take part in an "experimental community" (34). For more, see *Experimental Life: Vitalism in Romantic Science and Literature*. The Johns Hopkins UP, 2013.



of Science should ever create any material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition, and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the Poet . . . will be ready to follow the steps of the Man of Science, not only in those general indirect effects, but he will be at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of the Science itself. . . . If the time should ever come when what is now called Science, thus familiarized to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the Poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the Being thus produced, as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man. (“Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*” 606-07)

This quote reinforces that poetry perseveres and withstands the discoveries of science. It conveys the sense that science can never undo or reinvent the work of poetry; in effect, poetry’s staying power emerges through the consideration of poetry as a science of its own. Poetry can be examined under the tenets of any science and retain its position of strength in the face of that science’s challenges as well as absorb, assimilate, and humanize its findings. Bearing in mind Wordsworth’s ideas here, it is useful to situate his work within scientific fields of sound, acoustics and psychoacoustics, hearing and speech sciences, psychology, and cognition to see how the poetry both anticipates and withstands these burgeoning fields of understanding as they have evolved through history.

Undoubtedly, Wordsworth recognized scientific conceptions of sound insofar as he used them for his poetic ends. His poetry shows that he viewed the mechanical ear as an influential sense organ both physiologically and aesthetically. One’s ear was the medium through which one discerned discord or concord and made judgments that defined one’s taste for sounds, poetry, and music. Humankind’s ability to hear harmony reinforced its superiority because the ear was an organ that could receive sound and thus imbue the body with powerful feeling as a result. Through the ear, the human body—and thus internal human emotions—could be agitated in sympathy to external forces, i.e., originary moments of sounds and their transmissions. The mental reception and construal of sounds were processed within the mind as soul. The nerves

responded to physical sound motion and created progressive motion in the body as a result. However, this motion could be seen not only through the physical force of sounds as pressure disturbances but also through the psychical forces of nonphysical sounds, as audible impressions propagated as ideas or associative phenomena—psychical sound and motions that were as affect-producing as the acoustic events of physical originary moments.

In Wordsworth's context, sound and the construal of sound advanced knowledge. Advancements were not only possible through sound for experimental and laboratory science but also for other diverse fields of inquiry: of physiology; of religion; of perception; of music; of aesthetics; of judgment; of taste; of sensibility; of psychology; and more. For him, the ear was the organ that conveys into "the ear of the listener" those "sound[s] which the Poet feels" through words, which express "the full strength of the imagination involved in the word[s]," such as those Wordsworth discusses in the "Preface to *Poems* (1815)," whereby "the affections are called in" (631-32). The anatomical ear was a complex mechanism central to the nature of being, and hearing sound resulted in idea generation and the creation of physiological, physical, and psychological reality.

In our own context, sound serves similar functions, and we define it in ways that accentuate its physicality as well as its psychophysicality. Charles E. Speaks delineates the physical aspects of sound in correlation to the psychological. Physical sound he defines "by reference to properties of the *source* of the event that we call 'sound' and to properties of a *medium* in which, or along which, sound is transmitted" (Speaks 2; emphasis original). This definition implies movement, a pressure disturbance. In order for "a body to be a source of sound," that body "must be able to vibrate" (Speaks 2). When we hear sound, "what actually propagates through the air" are "pressure disturbances," which we consider in terms of waves

(Mullin et al. 1). These pressure disturbances travel, and when the waves reach the ear, the sound is detected, and we hear. Speaks writes that in terms of a psychological perspective, when the hearing sensation is considered as part of our definition of sound, “we emphasize *psychological* attributes of sound: pitch, loudness, and timbre” (2; emphasis original). The more intuitive approach, according to Speaks, is the psychological one because in understanding this approach to sound, it can seem easier to comprehend “*physical events* that characterize sound by reference to the psychological sensations or feelings that are associated with the myriad of sounds that we experience daily” (Speaks 2; emphasis original). The psychological approach clarifies the physical, in other words, and can be further considered in relation to oral communication. Mullin et al. define three parts to oral communication, which are “generation, propagation, and reception,” and explain that the study of these elements falls within the framework of psychoacoustics:

In verbal communication, generation refers to speech; propagation refers to the movement of sound waves in space from speaker to hearer; and reception refers to the process of hearing. The phrase ‘speech chain’ refers to the events linking the speaker’s brain with the listener’s brain; this chain includes generation of speech, feedback link to the speaker, propagation of sound waves, reception by the listener, and transmission of information from the hearing mechanism to the brain. . . . [These] processes . . . involve strong interactions among the physical, physiological, and psychological aspects of the world and our bodies. (1)

While the processes explained here move rather quickly in actuality, a careful examination of each process in detail, from speech sounds to the cognitive processes of listening, promises to reveal noteworthy information and enhance our understanding of poetry.

Poetry, because it is phonaesthetic and sounded yet also psychical, ensures physicality and psychophysicality through its form. This fact can be clarified by understanding how the brain processes the acoustic event in cognition, whether that event takes place through physical sound or psychical sound, i.e., auditory hallucinations or dialogisms. The bound speech of the

poem if recited becomes a pressure disturbance in the air and thus “pure soundstream” (Brogan 1173). The brain processes this soundstream of poetry, which presents different acoustic sounds to the ear simultaneously, using dichotic listening, which is defined by Reuven Tsur as “a method of delivering competing stimuli simultaneously to two ears” (*What Makes Sound Patterns Expressive* 12), and “hemispheric specialization” (Brogan 1174). Coding acoustic signals as either “linguistic or nonlinguistic, the latter including both ambient environmental . . . [sounds] and music,” the brain’s hemispheres sort and process, as T. V. F Brogan explains:

The analysis and [interpretation of language sounds] . . . is (in right-handed people) a left-brain activity, the same hemisphere responsible for cognition, motor activity, and rational thought. At the same time, musical [sounds] . . . are interpreted in the right brain . . . . Complex aural stimuli . . . where words and music are delivered simultaneously, are processed on double tracks. Poetry . . . is coded into sonal patterns . . . [that] are both lexical-semantic as well as prosodic (e.g. meter, rhyme, assonance) . . . [and] is processed by both hemispheres simultaneously, the former . . . [sounds] being interpreted by one side of the brain as linguistic and the latter . . . [sounds] by the other as aesthetic. In short, rhythm in . . . [language] is left-brain[;] pattern recognition is right-brain. As verse is heard, speech . . . prosody is handled and sense extracted—or created, depending on one’s epistemology—by the left brain, while verse-art . . . [prosody] is handled and aesthetic pattern recognized by the right brain. Both sides of the brain are listening to poetry simultaneously but differently. (1174)

More simply put, poetry is complex aural stimuli coded by the brain based on sonic patterns of language and prosody; as such, in cognitive processing, the left brain simultaneously processes linguistic information as the right brain processes aesthetic information.

This notion of lateralization assumes that the processing of linguistic information and aesthetic information are mutually exclusive, which is problematic considering the possibilities of perception beyond the speech mode and the nonspeech mode for poetry. Tsur posits a third possibility for speech perception, which he calls the “poetic mode” (*What Makes Sound Patterns Expressive* 13). Essentially, in the poetic mode, language (i.e., speech) and prosody (i.e., nonspeech) may not always be perceived and categorized as different acoustic signals, or

categorial perception, but through continuous streams of precategorial sensory information. This mode operates on the assumption of the probability “that not all elements in the double code” of linguistic and nonlinguistic are acknowledged in the first reading of the poem, “a fact which legitimizes the close prosodic analysis of poetry as training for heightened response in subsequent readings” (Brogan 1174). According to Tsur, this happens for several possible reasons: “nonphonetic acoustic information may be available in speech mode,” “listeners may switch, at will, back and forth between phonetic categories and auditory information,” and speech processors could fail and process speech as nonspeech (*What Makes Sound Patterns Expressive* 13-15). Tsur acknowledges that in the poetic mode of speech perception, “some rich precategorial sensory information is subliminally perceived, which is the source of the ‘mysterious’ intuitions concerning speech sounds” (*What Makes Sound Patterns Expressive* viii). In processing of speech and nonspeech, the sorting and coding becomes complex, and precategorial sensory information floods our consciousnesses (Tsur, *Playing by Ear and the Tip of the Tongue* 2). Most of the time, we eventually navigate this information by categorizing it successfully to respond “to rapidly-changing situations” or “to gather information required for making adequate judgments about reality,” but sometimes, our ability to categorize precategorial sensory information can be either rapid or delayed, and rapid categorization and delayed categorization have advantages and disadvantages (Tsur, *Playing by Ear and the Tip of the Tongue* 2).

Tsur clarifies his definition of precategorial information and the advantages and disadvantages of rapid and delayed categorization using a helpful anecdote about Helen Keller. In Keller’s case, Tsur reiterates that before she “acquired the word *ice cream*” (emphasis original), she experienced precategorial sensations “on her tongue and fingertips”:

‘When I wanted anything I liked—ice cream, for instance, of which I was very fond—I had a delicious taste on my tongue (which, by the way, I never have now), and in my hand I felt the turning of the freezer. I made the sign, and my mother knew I wanted ice cream. I ‘thought’ and desired in my fingers.’ (qtd. in Tsur, *Playing by Ear and the Tip of the Tongue 2*)

In this anecdote, the advantages and disadvantages of rapid and delayed categorization come into view. Before Keller knew the word, evidence of her delayed categorization, the precategory sensations she knew on her tongue and fingers were ample in her understanding, and after she acquired the language, those precategory sensations disappeared. The initial delayed categorization was advantageous in that she could adapt and negotiate flexible ways of knowing. Once the “diffuse sensations” were “recorded into a complex, focused concept . . . and tagged with a verbal label,” she experienced a loss of information that had up until that point been integral (Tsur, *Playing by Ear and the Tip of the Tongue 2*). Tsur’s views on precategory sensory information and the poetic mode of speech perception offer valuable insight into understanding the subliminal perception of speech sounds, make a claim about the expressive value of such, and allow for the intuitive analysis of nonspeech possibilities in language. Overall, understanding precategory sensory information enlarges our psychological relationship to the processing of poetry considered as either speech or nonspeech.<sup>16</sup>

Regardless of whether Wordsworth knew anything about how the brain processes the acoustic events in cognition, or whether those events were physical or psychical, his literary doctrine and poetry anticipated Tsur’s cognitive poetics. In “adopt[ing] the very language of men” for his poetry (“Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*” 600), Wordsworth pledges that “Poets do not write for Poets alone . . . but for men” and “must express . . . as other men express themselves[.]”

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<sup>16</sup> Cognitive poetics might advance our understanding of Romantic-era notions of idiocy. For more on idiocy, see chapter two.

. . . selecting from the real language of men”; such aims must permit linguistic variation (in competence and performance) and acoustic range (608). To express poetry through the human voice is at the core of this precept, and since that voice collectively resounds, it is therefore neither solitary nor egocentric but rather both democratic and communal simultaneously. Wordsworth notes his ability to take “liberty” in “supply[ing] . . . [him]self with endless combinations of forms and imagery” to affect “the great and universal passions of men, the most general and interesting of their occupations, and the entire world of nature”; in this statement, he acknowledges similar poetic freedoms from vast perceptual possibilities and entities (“Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*” 608). I suggest, then, his poetry in both its language and prosody operates always in the poetic mode as understood through considerations of perceptual difference.

We can make the case for the poetic mode as it exists in print texts as well as in oral recitations and auditory translations, past and present. Speech is not always speech easily categorized, and likewise, prosody is not always nonspeech easily categorized. Acknowledging the poetic mode, both prosodic speech and linguistic prosody are categorially and precategorially possible and propose rich analytical potential not only in textual spaces but in recitation and auditory translation spaces past and present. Taking Tsur’s ideas into consideration, we can theorize that poetry offers moments of prosodic speech, where phonetic categories of speech present, again either categorially or precategorially, not as linguistic but as acoustic nonspeech with intuitive interpretive opportunities. Additionally, if we accept Tsur’s poetic mode, then linguistic prosody becomes another possibility, with auditory information (i.e., acoustic nonspeech, if you will) presenting as speech and allowing for articulations beyond the purview of those semantically relevant. Further, there is always the potential for continuous streams of categorial and precategorial sensory information to be delivered to or received by those who

might process rapidly or on delay depending on how one perceives. Because perceiving phonetic speech as acoustic nonspeech and perceiving acoustic nonspeech as articulated prosodic speech is possible simultaneously, theorizing the poetic mode is crucial to understanding the foundations of Romantic poetry, contextualizing its recitation history, and suggesting its future auditory events.

Before cognitive poetics, though similar in its aim to understand language, in the seventeenth century, linguistic theories and practices in England were concerned with connections of speech to thought. According to Murray Cohen, language at this time could be studied as an object, and “the relationship between language and reality . . . [was] sought in the physical parts of writing and speech—letters and sounds” (7). Several seventeenth-century treatises on the physicality of speech reinforced the importance of sound in making meaning. Owen Price’s *The Vocal Organ* (1665) was one of many texts that “provided a scheme visualizing the physiology of sounds . . . [to] propose an articulatory phonetics based on an ordered, elemented, and evident arrangement of the speech organs” (Cohen 11). Christopher Cooper’s *The English Teacher* (1687) was another such text. A schoolmaster, Cooper sought to impose rules through his “detailed descriptions of physical sounds” and “alphabetized lists” concerning phonology and phonetics: “he finds the possibilities of language in the ‘powers’ of characters” (Cohen 13). As with most treatises during this time, these texts, and others like them, were concerned with linguistic inquiry as a site for knowledge making.<sup>17</sup> To ensure a comprehensive understanding for those pursuing language as an object for scientific study, shorthand systems were developed in the search for “physical, visual, and precise representation

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<sup>17</sup> Murray Cohen surveys these seventeenth-century texts and others leading into the Romantic period in *Sensible Words: Linguistic Practice in England 1640-1785*. The Johns Hopkins UP, 1977.



of the forms and meanings of language” (Cohen 17). These systems included sign systems for those deaf and hard of hearing and were based on the concept of sematology. Defined by George Dalgarno as ““a general name for all interpretation by arbitrary signs,”” and as the ““art of impressing conceits of the mind upon sensible and material objects,”” sematology is foundational in accepting sign systems’ usefulness and for thinking about the relationship between language and thought (qtd. in Cohen 17).

Seventeenth-century linguists’ interests in the materiality of language and its association with thought led to eighteenth-century interests in the rhetorical and affective possibilities associated with language and communication. Oral emphasis became the dominant concern in linguistics, and conveying the understanding through recitation was key. John Rice’s *An Introduction to the Art of Reading* (1765) represents the view that recitation could ““evoke the relationship between thought and speech”” and transfer sentiment from one person speaking to another listening (Cohen 105). According to Cohen, the ability to transfer sentiment through language depended on the ““competence of the speaker rather than on qualities embedded in the language,”” but it was accepted that the individual could use their own ““distinctive linguistic features”” to this end (106). The ““arrangement of voice inflexions and pauses”” could ““express each sentence with appropriate ‘passion or emotion’”” and shifted the study of language as object to the study of the mind:

The ‘mind’ that is expressed by vocal tones giving evidence of passion or emotion and the ‘mind’ evident in syntactic logic are obviously two quite different ideas. The first, and the dominant idea in the period . . . , defines the linguistic expression of mental activity in a social, specifically rhetorical context stressing communication of intention through oral/aural signals associated with feelings or intentions. . . . Sounds, not words, . . . [became] the principal tools of communication because through them we recognize ‘the powers of the Living Voice’ . . . . Pronouncing and hearing . . . sounds effectively leads us into the passion or sentiment of every speech . . . since the goal of speech . . . is to affect the passions. (Cohen 106-07)

This lean toward psychology signaled a change in how the affective function of language could materialize, and articulatory phonetics emerged. Articulatory phonetics was concerned with sounds, including “discussions of basic sounds, emphasis, pause, modulation, articulation, accent, pronunciation, quantity, and tone” (Cohen 110). During this shift, lecturer Benjamin Martin, previously mentioned for his role in advancing knowledge about the ear and auditory processing, published *Institutions of Language* (1748), which contains his *Physico-Grammatical Essay on the Propriety and Rationale of the English Tongue* and includes a section wherein he “discusses each letter in terms of the physiology of its pronunciation” (Cohen 112). Texts, such as Martin’s, are evidence of theories of language that perceived speech as social and affective. Additional publications on orthoepy, during the development of this “new science of ‘philophony,’” proliferated, and some also emphasized pleasure’s role in communication, as elocutionist Thomas Sheridan’s *oeuvre* reveals (Cohen 112-14). The importance of linguistic sounds in the eighteenth century led some to instruct others’ pronunciation of spoken sounds by graphically specifying these sounds using a system of notation modeled on musical notation, which could, in addition to marking the emphasis of speech, confront “speech defects by comparing the voice to a musical instrument” (Cohen 116).<sup>18</sup> This system was also used as a way of recording printed information. Studying linguistic structures by focusing on the sounds of language and affect revealed compelling information about articulation, accent, vocal variations, euphony, stress, cadence, pauses, respiration, punctuation, attention, stimulation, artificiality, force, and more. In this linguistic environment, Romantic poetry emerged.

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<sup>18</sup> John Hollander writes that “there is no analogue of painting . . . [or] sculpture for the preservation of aural shades,” and “until the invention the phonograph,” there was “no way of recording sounds of discourse” (46). For more, see “Wordsworth and the Music of Sound.” *New Perspectives on Coleridge and Wordsworth: Selected Papers from the English Institute*, edited by Geoffrey Hartman, Columbia UP, 1972, pp. 41-84.

Theories of vitalist affective phonetics help us understand how speech, thought, and feeling come together in words themselves on the tongue to make language an embodied force that is always agitating others through utterance, and Wordsworth composed his poetry and literary doctrine with an interest in this sonic linguistic milieu. His thematic treatment of the effects of audition in several lyrics shows that he understood well the expressive value of sound and its analytical possibilities. One example of this treatment of audition thematically is his “Power of Music.”<sup>19</sup> In this poem, Wordsworth admits the power of an Orphic minstrel to control a crowd of diverse individuals:

What an eager assembly! what empire is this!  
The weary have life and the hungry have bliss;  
The mourner is cheared, and the anxious have rest;  
And the guilt-burthened Soul is no longer opprest. (9-12)

The thematic representation here is of the collective excitement and restorative experience in response to the sounds from the mythologized minstrel. If we pay close attention to the linguistic sounds, it becomes evident that the theme treated in the poem can be embodied in the acoustics of speech by the voiceless glottal fricative h, which is aspirated, “articulated by expelling air through the mostly open glottis and vocal tract,” and functions in recitation to create the sound quality of a sigh (Mullin et al. 137). Though this might not be the predominant sound that attracts an attentive ear, this particular speech sound pre-categorially transfuses the affect associated with the experience and does so whether the eventual categorization happens rapidly or after much delay. Tsur suggests that this acoustic coding is a way of examining “emotional symbolism” through the speech sounds (*What Makes Sound Patterns Expressive* vii). These pre-categorial and

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<sup>19</sup> Vanessa Agnew discusses conflicting aesthetic and philosophical discourses as she examines travel literature and its relationship to knowledge in her discussion of Charles Burney and the power of music in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries through the myth of Orpheus in *Enlightenment Orpheus: The Power of Music in Other Worlds*. Oxford UP, 2008.

categorial codes are not stable: they vary from one attentive reader to the next. This reality should not negatively affect this coding and render it any less critical. We must remember that, as Brogan advises, while “it is important that objective acoustic and linguistic facts be distinguished from subjective perceptions by speakers and auditors,” “such [subjective] perceptions themselves also constitute facts” (1173). This subjective analysis and experience of the language reinforces that Wordsworth’s poetry is a vehicle for experiential, embodied reading, a practice he engendered and outlined in his poetic philosophy, and emphasizes a somaesthetic reading. Richard Shusterman’s philosophy of somaesthetics, defined as the “critical, meliorative study of the experience and use of one’s body as a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation (*aisthesis*),” helps us to recognize that “knowledge of the world is improved not by denying our bodily senses” and to place cognitive value on subjective sensory perception (299, 302; emphasis original). Through this careful examination of language, analytical potentialities are enlarged. As the acoustics of specific speech sounds in the text receive analytical attention that moves beyond thematic, semantic representation, a further range of associative or imitative phenomena becomes possible.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Not everyone accepts the possibility that phonemes represent material sound. Michel Chion and James A. Steintrager claim that “language, in its oral form, does not have sounds as its foundation but phonemes” (45). They explain that Ferdinand de Saussure in *Course in General Linguistics* asserted that “‘It is impossible for sound alone, a material element, to belong to language. It is only a secondary thing, a substance put to use’” (qtd. in Chion and Steintrager 45). According to Saussure, “‘the essence of the ‘linguistic signifier’ ‘is *not phonic but incorporeal*—constituted not by its material substance but solely by the differences that separate its sound-image from all others’” (qtd. in Chion and Steintrager 45; emphasis added). Chion and Steintrager insist that isolating the phoneme from its “linguistic belonging” makes the word “sonic matter, voice, [and] noise,” and they believe that those who have done this kind of work “have never produced anything of significance” (45). Citing Roman Jakobson’s *Six Lectures on Sound and Meaning* (1942) as support, they refute the phoneticians belief “‘that the investigation of the *production* of sound, rather than of the sound itself, gave one the motor equivalent of the acoustic phenomenon’” that assume[s] “‘a one-to-one correspondence between the two aspects’”

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and that “the classification of motor phenomena has an exact equivalent in the classification of acoustic phenomena” (qtd. in Chion and Steintrager 46; emphasis original).

In other words, they reiterate that it is not productive to consider language as sound because they claim that “phonetic units exist neither acoustically nor from the perspective of their phonatory production” (Chion and Steintrager 46). Jakobson offered evidence to support that if “one of the phonatory organs is missing[,] then another one can function in its place, without the hearer being aware of this” (qtd. in Chion and Steintrager 46). This discussion is limited because its focus is on those with “normal hearing” and on the insensitivity of most interlocutors to the pronunciation of words:

for a language that we understand, we carve spoken words into phonemes (which are not sonic) and not into sonic units. If our interlocutor pronounces a phrase that consists of many phonetic, semantic, and other elements that are familiar to us and does so in a context that facilitates our comprehension of them, then it is literally impossible to hear it as it is truly pronounced. We hear the text rather than the sounds. If the speaker ‘swallows’ a syllable or an entire word, we restore them quite easily. The only thing we can extract from the sounds is the general melody of the voice and its rhythm, but each syllable as such is literally inaudible, so conditioned are we to hearing such and such syllable as necessarily occurring in this spot. The same sort of recovery function goes for manuscript texts, which we manage to decipher using context . . . . (Chion and Steintrager 47)

It may be true that the context of an utterance might determine the interlocutor’s focus when a speaker’s semantic content becomes the sole object of the live communication event, but it is not always the case. Accepting that attention can be unitarily focused neglects the understanding that post-Enlightenment theories of attention began to shift toward multifocality, which acknowledged the brain’s ability to focus on multiple stimuli. According to Natalie Phillips, the initial theory of attention was “grounded in an older tradition of religious meditation” and “emphasized the virtues of paying attention to one thing (and only one thing)” (4). However, during the Enlightenment period, attention was “redefine[d] as an ongoing process of coordinating and cognitively orchestrating responses to multiple stimuli” (Phillips 4). Because they are aware that competing marginal internal and external stimuli as represented in language serve purposes that could go unnoticed if one directs reading and thus hermeneutic focus only on one thing, interlocutors pay attention not only to semantics but also the acoustic nuances of the text; indeed, such acoustic nuances are processed simultaneously through different sides of the brain. For more, see Chion, Michel, and James A. Steintrager. *Sound: An Acoulogical Treatise*. Duke UP, 2016. See also Phillips, Natalie M. *Distraction: Problems of Attention in Eighteenth-Century Literature*. Johns Hopkins UP, 2016, along with Guenther, F. H. “Auditory Feedback Control Is Involved at Even Sub-phonemic Levels of Speech Production.” *Language, Cognition, and Neuroscience*, vol. 29, no. 1, 2014, pp. 44-45.

Nevertheless, the possible semantic focus of the live communication event shifts in a textual poetic context. While the speaker's semantic content is still conveyed in the textual poetic context, the attention to the utterance becomes more complex and multifaceted, especially when/if the interlocutor assumes the role of the speaking voice in recitation. The syllables become audible in this context especially when the speaker's voice and its rhythm are considered as they become not only motoric but also acoustic through speech production. Whether the interlocutor's hearing is impaired or not, the interlocutor translates the voice into one that becomes sounded through the material sound of one's own utterance. Therefore, to consider the language of the poem as material sound, a reader must consider the phonemes not as abstract but rather as embodied, articulated, and fully voiced speech.

Looking closer at "Stanzas on the Power of Sound" reveals the importance of sound to Wordsworth's poetics: its physical, psychological, and cognitive possibilities. A poem that began from pieces of surviving manuscripts brought together between 1828-1835 exists now as the product of multiple revisions, corrected proofs, punctuation changes, title variations, the clarification of obscure passages, and other reworkings (Curtis et al. 112, 438-40).<sup>21</sup> The earliest complete version, "On the Power of Sound," evolved into the reading text of 1835, titled "Stanzas on the Power of Sound," as the result of Wordsworth's obsessive revising to establish, convey, clarify, and reinforce its central idea (Curtis et al. 112, 438-40).<sup>22</sup> That idea, as Jared

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<sup>21</sup> Curtis et al. trace the genesis and revisions of this poem in its manuscript forms and note that the work in several variations appears in the Cornell MS. 6, and the Dove Cottage MSS. 89, 106, 107, 108, 115, 131, 134, 135, 137, and 138.

<sup>22</sup> As Curtis et al.'s volume shows, the title of the poem reverberates through the paratexts in its many forms: by Wordsworth and others, the poem has been referred to as "Sound," "some stanzas on the Power of Sound," "On Power of Sound," "On the power of sound," *On the Power of Sound*, "Ode on Sound," "Poem to the Power of Sound," and "On the Power of Sound" (xvii, xxxv, 210, 438-39, 449, 462, 464, 680). For my purposes, I have examined "Stanzas on the Power of Sound," which is the 1835 text.

Curtis et al. underscore in the headnote to the Dove Cottage MS. 131 in *The Cornell Wordsworth*, is that the world is at the mercy of sound: an idea emphasized not only by the title and semantic content but also by the poem's phonetic dimensions (112). In the reading that follows of "Stanzas on the Power of Sound," a close examination of the poem's sounds using auditory scene analysis reinforces the phonetic qualities of the poem apart from the semantic.

In this analysis, I respond to James Chandler's call that we should examine the "distinction between the sounds that words have and the sounds to which they refer." The distinction that comes into view through this kind of reading is important because through it, we can examine the potentialities for how sound might be activated and received. When the discourse of the poem establishes a significant relationship between such sounds, an examination of what sounds are heard through the language itself and what connotations are produced by the words themselves informs an enlarged acoustic reading of the work that allows for the working back and forth between the cognitive possibilities of the verse, giving full consideration to the speech mode, the nonspeech mode, and the poetic mode. Chandler claims that in Wordsworth's ode on sound, "the sounds of the words themselves . . . are patently organized to constitute the poem's formal auditory system." He argues that while "[t]here is . . . considerable variety in the way the poem fulfills the requirements of its formal scheme of meter and rhyme" and also "variety in the sound of individual words and of the sound patterns by which they are combined," these variations are "far subtler . . . than that of the widely varying sounds to which the poem refers in its semantic register: the roar, the bleat, the shout, the throb, the prayer, the lullaby" (Chandler). He goes on to say that the

double-sided sound capacities of poetry (and indeed of language)—its capacity both to be sounded and to refer to sound— . . . seems to suggest two conclusions: first, that the pre-semantic sounds of the world are made meaningful by their being semantically distinguished in such words as *roar*, *bleat*, *shout*; second, that

when these words are themselves brought into the *formal* sound pattern of a poem's distinctive music, they can be 'heard' as constituting yet another kind of order: let's call this musical order 'post-semantic.' (emphasis original)

On these points, Chandler does not further expound. Instead, he moves on to discuss his larger claim that in this ode, Wordsworth both "replays the sounds of his earlier poetry, notably the 'Immortality Ode,'" a claim previously acknowledged by both Hollander in 1972 (68) and Curtis in 1999 (8), and "finds his earlier poetry too much given to the free affective play of sound." Chandler argues that "[f]or the later Wordsworth, sound schemes signify larger schemes drawn from the Christian Bible." While it is possible that this Christian context was important for Wordsworth at this time, Geoffrey Hartman writes that in this ode, his "reference to the Logos is secondary" and that "it re-enforces a personal knowledge" that Wordsworth would have deemed selfish (186). Hartman calls this kind of knowledge "general necessitarianism," which Wordsworth would have criticized because it moves away from the "intrinsic and impersonal energy of the senses" he strived to apprehend (181). Considering sound schemes in the Christian context only neutralizes the other possible interchanges in the poem and perpetuates a readership who might share a similar set of religious values. The reading against the "secular power" of the sounds' auditory effects and affects confines the poem to a Christian context Wordsworth would have found tyrannical even in 1835 long after his religious position became more orthodox. However, while Chandler's argument that "the primacy of sound's affective power is more like the problem than the solution" in the later ode is not that convincing, his assertion that this later ode "is about the electric life of auditory affect" deserves more attention. Therefore, I give further consideration to the sounds he terms "pre-semantic" and "post-semantic" to resituate Wordsworth's thinking about the power of sound. Because this poem satisfies Chandler's criteria, in my close reading, I suggest the sounds embedded in this poem's sonic environment,



semantics aside, (i.e., the pre-semantic and post-semantic soundscapes), establish the importance of the phonetic dimension of language apart from the semantic.

Before considering the poem in its phonetic dimension, we should understand the semantic dimension that Wordsworth develops at the poem's open in the 15-line Argument. At its semantic level, this preface suggests that the ode should be read only once foundational notions of sound are understood. The speaker, in foregrounding the semantic aims of the poem, expects the reader to already have an historical understanding of the ear, of hearing, of listening, and of sound, and thereby already considers pre-semantic and post-semantic notions of sound before the message of the poem comes in clear:

The Ear addressed, as occupied by a spiritual functionary, in communion with sounds, individual, or combined in studied harmony.—Sources and effects of those sounds (to the close of 6th Stanza).—The power of music, whence proceeding, exemplified in the idiot.—Origin of music, and its effect in early ages—how produced (to the middle of 10th Stanza).—The mind recalled to sounds acting casually and severally.—Wish uttered (11th Stanza) that these could be united into a scheme or system for moral interests and intellectual contemplation.—(Stanza 12<sup>th</sup>.) The Pythagorean theory of numbers and music, with their supposed power over the motions of the universe—imagination consonant with such a theory.—Wish expressed (in 11th Stanza) realised, in some degree, by the representation of all sounds under the form of thanksgiving to the Creator.—(Last Stanza) the destruction of earth and the planetary system—the survival of audible harmony, and its support in the Divine Nature, as revealed in Holy Writ. (Wordsworth, “Stanzas on the Power of Sound” 116)

The voice speaking the Argument has noted that the ear is being addressed and explains that within the ear resides “a spiritual functionary.” This notion of a spiritual official occupying the ear conveys the sense that the ear is in a dialectical position—the ear is the place of synthesis between two opposing theses: one thesis is the speaker's voice, and the antithesis is the inner spiritual official. The speaker's voice speaks the poem on the printed page and includes all possible future physical speakers of the poem (and thus all the sounds embedded in the soundscape of the poem), and the antithesis is always in dialectic with these sounds. The ear

itself is “in communion with sounds, individual, or combined in studied harmony”—it has a relationship to all possible sounds. That the ear is placed in a position to distinguish sound “Sources,” to know the “effects of those sounds,” to see the effects of the power of sound “exemplified in the idiot,” to know how sounds are “produced,” and to experience them “acting casually and severally” reinforces that the ear is an active, important organ.

In providing this foundation for the reader, Wordsworth reifies sound as well as the acts of hearing and listening. The ear is hearing multiple sounds—both segregated and integrated sounds. The physical reality of soundwaves is that they are superimposed, but in this poem, the understanding is clear that we cannot necessarily take apart the soundwave; instead, the mind, through the ear, must listen selectively and segregate sounds into foreground sounds and background sounds so as to realize the harmonic possibilities: that these multiple sounds “could be united into a scheme or system for moral interests and intellectual contemplation.”

Wordsworth seems to acknowledge in this opening Argument that for the ear, there are many sound possibilities and judgments to be made about what constitutes harmony, and he wants his reader to take that into consideration before reading further into the poem. Wordsworth views the sonic as a way to create affect in others, and because he understands his responsibilities for educating the passions and authorizing feeling through sound, it is an important case to establish that through its functions, the ear can hear, can listen, can serve a spiritual function, has moral and intellectual power, and can discern the difference between multiple registers of sound to locate harmony. As he creates this sonic environment in the poem, he perpetuates a kind of listening from his interlocutors that compels them in their moral and intellectual lives and directs them to feel and think. Poetry exists for this purpose. It functions to not only reveal but also rupture the world of noise, which exists for everyone, and it provides a window where “audible

harmony” can exist when everything else has fallen away. He makes the point through this Argument that even beyond a semantic understanding of language, the ear can make one more in tune with human nature, as through the ear, the structure of human nature is represented through the evoking of the emotions of humankind—a task he recognized as vital.

Because Wordsworth’s poem semantically and phonetically treats sound, examining the sonic environment he creates for his interlocutor to hear and to sound in recitation forces the discursive relationship Chandler finds so valuable. Though Chion and Steintrager maintain that “[d]uring the Romantic period, . . . no one spoke of a ‘sonic environment’—nor of ‘environment’ in general,” the German term *Umwelt*, which literally means “the ‘world around,’ has long been in use”; in this epoch, one could argue that “[t]here was a sound and a person” (11). Sound and the subject were an entity. This Romantic understanding of the sonic environment positioned the subject to feel “at the center of sound,” and this egocentric nature of audition built up sound “as a revelatory fantasy” that could “emphasize by a sort of mirroring effect, as it were, the individuality of the one listening to them” (Chion and Steintrager 11). The poem’s sonic environment, or soundscape, provokes other questions about possibilities for meaning in the poem: how do the sounds train the reader to feel at the center of this sonic environment? What certain sounds promote the revelatory fantasy of the interlocutor (and of the speaker)? If the focus shifts from one part of the sonic environment to another, how do the effects shift? These are hermeneutic questions that renew with each reader-listener-performer’s act of interpretation (exegetical and eisegetical). The auditory environment is not fixed interpretive territory; it is, conversely, inventive and freighted with subjective interpretive possibility, as the auditory scene analysis suggests.

According to Albert Bregman, “auditory scene analysis” functions as a model for auditory perception, and using it, we can listen closely to continuous streams of sound in the sonic environment and analyze the sound mixture by segmenting the stream. The goal of analyzing these mixtures of sounds is “the recovery of separate descriptions of each separate thing in the [sonic] environment” (Bregman 9). The environment for my purposes refers to the poem as a perceptual entity made up of a mixture of potential sound sources—an “auditory stream”—resulting from physical, psychological, and cognitive sound (Bregman 10).<sup>23</sup> To perform auditory scene analysis, different parts of the auditory stream are first segregated and then analyzed. It is difficult for a “listener to hear the entire sequence as a single stream of sound,” and differences in effects of the auditory stream vary “when listeners are trying to hear

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<sup>23</sup> Though I use the terms rather correspondingly, Bregman explains why he chooses “auditory stream” over “sound”:

I refer to the perceptual unit that represents a single happening as an auditory stream. Why not just call it a sound? There are two reasons why the word stream is better. First of all[,] a physical happening (and correspondingly its mental representation) can incorporate more than one sound . . . . A series of footsteps, for instance, can form a single experienced event, despite the fact that each footstep is a separate sound. A soprano singing with a piano accompaniment is also heard as a coherent happening, despite being composed of distinct sounds (notes). Furthermore, the singer and piano together form a perceptual entity—the “performance”—that is distinct from other sounds that are occurring. Therefore, our mental representations of acoustic events can be multifold in a way that the mere word “sound” does not suggest. By coining [this] new word [“stream”] . . . , we are free to load it up with whatever theoretical properties seem appropriate.

A second reason for preferring the word “stream” is that the word “sound” refers indifferently to the physical sound in the world and to our mental experience of it. It is useful to reserve the word “stream” for a perceptual representation, and the phrase “acoustic event” or the word “sound” for the physical cause. I view a stream as a computational stage on the way to the full description of an auditory event. The stream serves the purpose of clustering related qualities. By doing so, it acts as a center for our description of an acoustic event. (10)

For more, see *Auditory Scene Analysis: The Perceptual Organization of Sound*. MIT P, 1994.

coherence or segregation” based on the rate or frequency of segregation, i.e., how fast and how often the mixture of sounds are disentangled, or based on how attentive listeners are to certain parts of the auditory stream, i.e., how the listener chooses to focus (Bregman 643). The separating of synthesized soundscapes of the poem to examine strands of sounds and single sonic events allows for the analysis of complex auditory environments through close listening.<sup>24</sup> My reading considers potential soundscapes in “Stanzas on the Power of Sound” and analyzes these auditory scenes. In this analysis, I view auditory affect not only as the product of physical sound on the body but also as psychological and cognitive (i.e., auditory hallucinations and spiritual concerns with sound related to the mind as soul).

In this poem, the physical soundscape is formed from the pressure disturbances produced by the vocal organs that produce speech when the language of the poem is recited. Voicing the language of the poem with close attention to speech production allows the attentive reader to listen to the physical, pre-semantic and post-semantic, sounds produced through linguistic structures. This voicing and listening to pre-semantic and post-semantic sounds unifies the acoustic, psychoacoustic, semantic, and aesthetic domains of the poem in the body. The body performs the soundscape, as the language of the poem forces the speech production. The utterance results from the interaction of “the lungs, the trachea (windpipe), the larynx (which contains the vocal folds), the pharynx (throat), the nasal cavity (nose), and the oral cavity (mouth)”; “[t]hese organs form a tube starting at the lungs and ending at the lips” (Mullin et al.

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<sup>24</sup> Michel Chion writes that “Pierre Schaeffer gave the name *reduced listening* to the listening mode that focuses on the traits of the sound itself, independent of its cause and of its meaning” (29; emphasis original). For a brief chapter that defines three listening modes, causal listening, semantic listening, and reduced listening, see *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. Columbia UP, 1994.

97). The process originates in the muscles of the chest and abdomen as they force air from the lungs that vibrates the vocal folds (Mullin et al. 97). As the vocal folds vibrate, they produce “a pressure pulse containing many frequencies,” called glottal pulses, which “enter the air tube in the vocal tract” (Mullin et al. 97). These pulses “are produced at very regular intervals,” and this “repeating, periodic wave that results from vocal fold vibrations is called the glottal wave” (Mullin et al. 97-99). The glottal wave, while not responsible for conveying linguistic information or making sounds, is “the source of the frequencies whose amplitude get enhanced or damped by the vocal tract” (Mullin et al. 101). The vocal tract “modifies the glottal wave” by enhancing or dampening its frequencies to make different sounds; it “selects out certain frequencies in the glottal wave for amplification” (Mullin et al. 101). The shape of the vocal tract “differentiates the speech sounds that we recognize as particular vowels or consonants”; (Mullin et al. 101). Sound energy changes “as it encounters muscle and tissue in the vocal tract,” enhancing “certain frequencies as they pass through” and suppressing those not corresponding “to allowed wavelengths for the vocal tract tube” (Mullin et al. 102). In other words, the sound source interacts with the vocal tract, and this interaction “changes the glottal wave on its route to the open air” (Mullin et al. 102). Each person’s glottal pitch varies in the way it sounds, but specific speech sounds, such as vowel sounds, will have their own patterns that make the speech sound recognizable. Reciting Wordsworth’s poetic language reifies this process, and understanding articulatory phonetics allows us to focus on how the vocal tract produces the physical sounds that exist as part of the soundscape of the poem.

In this attention to the language in the body, I take quite literally Wordsworth’s early assertion in the 1798 “Advertisement to *Lyrical Ballads*” that the volume was “written clearly with a view to ascertain how far the *language of conversation* in the middle and lower classes of

society *is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure,*” and I apply the claim to “Stanzas on the Power of Sound,” a poem I view as a multi-tiered conversation (591; emphasis added). It is a conversation during which the language is always adapted between Wordsworth and reader, between speaker and interlocutor, between the ear and sounds, between strophes, between rhythms, between centuries, between myths, and on and on. In the process of articulating the phonetics by saying the words aloud and expressing the speech sounds as emphatically as the poem necessitates, we can connect to and monitor these layered physical sounds of the poem. Wordsworth requests this focus on words in the “Note to *The Thorn* (1800)” because he knows that there are readers—and not only superstitious ones—who will “follow the turns of passion” in the process to “enter into the spirit of the Poem”: “Words, a Poet’s words more particularly, ought to be weighed in the balance of feeling and not measured by the space which they occupy on paper” (593-94). In this discussion of tautology, Wordsworth notes that a speaker “will cling to the same words, or words of the same character” because of “the interest which the mind attaches to words, not only as symbols of the passion, but as *things*, active and efficient, which are of themselves part of the passion” (594). These active words acquire life anew in the speaking body during recitation.

In this externalized reading, if we pay attention to the way the body produces these sounds, we can embody the speaker’s voice to reconstruct a physical soundstream much like the one Wordsworth might have himself created during composition and thus heard during recitation, and we listen to the pressure disturbances we create. Whereas without this focus on auditory phonetics, the language might be absorbed by the focus on the semantic content, discerning the sound patterns of the language through conscious listening to the speech sounds affirms that these sounds are salient parts of the composition on their own terms—and on, and in,

the tongue. In this process, the sonority of Wordsworth's linguistic structures becomes more distinct, and the acoustic speech sounds of his poetry acquire the status of foreground sound. R. Murray Schafer classifies foreground sounds into a category he terms *sound signals*, which he defines as “[a]ny sound to which the attention is particularly directed” (*The Tuning of the World* 275). For example, one set of speech sound signals apparent in the physical soundstream of this ode that demands attention are the fricative consonants, particularly s (as in see), z (as in zoo), ʃ (as in she), and ʒ (as in treasure). The lines of phonetic transcription that follow the lines of strophe one illustrate the pervasiveness of these particular sounds at the poem's open:

THY functions are ethereal,  
 ðaɪ 'fʌŋkʃənz ə i: 'θiəriəl  
 As if within thee dwelt a glancing Mind,  
 æz ɪf wɪn 'ðiːn ðə dwelt ə 'glɑːnsɪŋ maɪnd  
 Organ of Vision! And a Spirit aerial  
 'ɔːgən əv 'vɪʒən ənd ə 'spɪrɪt 'eəriəl  
 Informs the cell of hearing, dark and blind;  
 ɪn 'fɔːmz ðə sel əv 'hɪəriŋ dɑːk ənd blaɪnd  
 Intricate labyrinth, more dread for thought  
 'ɪntrɪkɪt 'læbərɪnθ mɔː dred fə θɔːt  
 To enter than oracular cave;  
 tə 'entə ðæn θə 'rækjələ keɪv  
 Strict passage, through which sighs are brought,  
 strɪkt 'pæsɪdʒ θruː wɪʃ 'saɪz ə brɔːt  
 And whispers, for the heart, their slave;  
 ənd 'wɪspəz fə ðə hɑːt ðeə sleɪv  
 And shrieks, that revel in abuse  
 ənd ʃriːks ðæt 'revl ɪn ə 'bjuːs  
 Of shivering flesh; and warbled air,  
 əv 'ʃɪvəriŋ fleʃ ənd 'wɔːbld eə  
 Whose piercing sweetness can unloose  
 huːz 'piəriŋ (sweetness) kæn 'ʌn 'luːs  
 The chains of frenzy, or entice a smile  
 ðə tʃeɪnz əv 'frenzi ə ɪn'taɪs ə smaɪl  
 Into the ambush of despair;  
 'ɪntuː ðiː 'æmbʊʃ əv dɪs'peə  
 Hosannas pealing down the long-drawn aisle,  
 ('Hosannas) 'piːlɪŋ daʊn ðə 'lɒŋdrɔːn aɪl  
 And requiems answered by the pulse that beats  
 ənd 'rekwiəmz 'ɑːnsəd baɪ ðə pʌls ðæt biːts



Devoutly, in life's last retreats!  
dɪ'vaʊtli ɪn laɪfs lɑːst rɪ'triːts<sup>25</sup>

Though not the only sounds that deserve our notice in the speech of this text, we should investigate these physical sounds for what they might teach us about the poem. According to Mullin et al., these “fricative consonants are made by constricting the air flow in the mouth so as to make the air turbulent,” which “results in a hissing sound” (137). These sibilant fricatives are distinguished by “the intensity of the noise associated with” them (Mullin et al. 142). Other fricative consonants, such as the voiceless glottal h mentioned earlier, are quieter than these particular sibilants. According to Tsur, some s sibilants can have “a *harsh* quality to varying degrees” and “at *some* level of description may have features with noisy potential and . . . hushing potential” (*What Makes Sound Patterns Expressive* 2-3; emphasis original). For example, the s and ʃ sibilant fricatives are formed from air “being forced through a very narrow channel (a groove created by the tongue) as well as past a straight, hard obstacle (the teeth), resulting in a much louder sound” (Mullin et al. 142). Tsur suggests the following explanation for “the notorious doubleedgedness of the sibilants”:

On the one hand, sound patterns based on . . . s [et al.] . . . may serve as sound imitations of natural noises of varying volumes . . . ; on the other hand, they may have a tender, hushing quality. This doubleedgedness seems to be derived from the phenomenon observed—*these consonants offer alternative cognitive strategies to direct our attention to the linguistic category or to the auditory information that carries it.* (*What Makes Sound Patterns Expressive* 44; emphasis added)

In other words, this sibilant is not coded the same way each time it is perceived.

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<sup>25</sup> The transcription was performed using the International Phonetic Alphabet, found at [linguistics.ucla.edu/people/keating/IPA/IPA\\_Kiel\\_2018\\_full.pdf](http://linguistics.ucla.edu/people/keating/IPA/IPA_Kiel_2018_full.pdf), with the help of the English phonetic transcription application *Phonetizer*, found at [www.phonetizer.com/ui](http://www.phonetizer.com/ui).

The brain in cognition has the ability to comprehend difference in sounds, and it codes them according to periodicity. Periodic sounds “are experienced as smoothly flowing”; they exist as “recurring signal portions with similar structures” and “may arouse in the perceiver a relatively relaxed kind of attentiveness (there will be no surprises; one may expect the same waveform to recur)” (Tsur, *What Makes Sound Patterns Expressive* 44). On the contrary, aperiodic sounds, with their “randomly changing waveforms” and idiosyncrasies “are experienced as disorder, as a disruption of the ‘relaxed kind of attentiveness,’” which results in “harsh, strident, [and] turbulent” experience (Tsur, *What Makes Sound Patterns Expressive* 44). A perceiver must acknowledge these options when analyzing what these sounds convey:

The tender or hushing quality of . . . s [et al.] . . . may have to do with their features and with their being among the few consonants that need little restructuring in the phonetic decoding of the signal, enabling the perceiver to attend to some rich, inarticulate sensory information. Their noisy quality springs from the aperiodic nature of their sensory information. (Tsur, *What Makes Sound Patterns Expressive* 44)

Whatever we ascertain about these fricative consonants as we code them as periodic or aperiodic, I suggest that it goes beyond a typical function of literary consonance where the idea of the poem is reiterated, the emotion is expressed, and the image is clarified through the sounds. That there are variations in the possibilities for the sound patterns not only physically but also cognitively could mean that Wordsworth wanted his attentive reader to pay attention to specific sound patterns for different though simultaneous purposes. Does Wordsworth amplify the volume here in the opening of the ode to convey an aggressiveness? Does he open a poem on the power of sound with a hushing quality? Does he open with noise? Could all of these possibilities exist in various lines of the first strophe—and throughout the remaining strophes? Why are these sounds so pervasive? How do they create affect as we hear them? What does that affective force feel like through the body? In a poem expressly about the power of sound, which is also about language

and feeling, attention directed to speech sounds that can be embodied reiterates the affective force of sound on the body that can only be felt through the recitative body when that body modulates the poem and attends to the periodic and aperiodic pulses felt at various points. In examining these sounds as part of a physical soundstream instead of through silent reading, we are embodying the emotion of the poem; the poem is writing itself into us—transcribing itself onto us through pressure disturbances of air flowing through the body and out into the world, thus allowing for a more primal exchange. This phonatory act of the articulation, however, is not the sole important exercise in recognizing physical sound embedded in the poem. According to Jakobson, this act is “merely a physiological prerequisite” for “the acoustic phenomenon,” which the words themselves construct (6). The soundscape, while also embodied during articulation and modulation and cognition, is also heard through the words as they are physically sounded.

These physically sounded words propagate psychological sound possibilities for the sonic environment of the poem. Every strophe includes examples of these sounded words that carry psychological associations for sound in some sense (see Chandler). In the first strophe, for a brief example, Wordsworth’s use of words, such as “sighs” (7), “whispers” (8), “shrieks” (9), “warbled air” (10), “Hosannas” (14), “requiems” (15), and “pulse that beats” (15), creates a complex cacophony of sounds. These selections are only a few from the multitude that we can extract and catalogue. From soothing sounds to sinister ones and from low pitched sounds to high pitched ones, the variations in intensity facilitate vibratory motion, both physical and fictive. Wenjuan Yuan discusses fictive motion in the context of “motion verbs or directional locative modifiers” that “seem to characterise the relevant entity as moving” in the grammar of the text although “actually static in the referred situations” (178). I appropriate this term for my purposes to establish an understanding of fictive vibratory motion in Wordsworth’s poetry, and I

use the term to characterize those words I view as carrying the physical possibilities for sound motion in their psychological apprehension. These aural stimuli not only stimulate the ear insofar as the words when read aloud are physically sounded and produce pressure disturbances in the air during the process of vocal resonance but also operate textually to produce auditory hallucinations and thus become dialogisms in the double voicing, i.e., the interlocutor's/reader's sounding of the imagined sounds of the speaker's physical sounds.

In these moments, the poem moves beyond what the existing transcription makes physically possible through its language and into the aural realm and what is psychologically possible in the auditory imagination. This close listening with the auditory imagination—a sort of hearing beyond the physical into fictive vibratory motion—is listening to acousmatic sound. Brian Kane defines an acousmatic sound as “a sound that one hears without seeing what causes it” (4). For an acousmatic experience, Kane writes that in isolating sound “from seeing (and the rest of the sensory modalities),” we can study it for “its own sake”: the listener can “grasp the sound itself as a ‘sound object’” (5). The sound object in this sense can be studied on its own as a nonreferential entity in the poem. Because sound and meaning are so intertwined, however, this study of acousmatic sound available as the poem is read aloud does not prohibit or dismiss the semantics of the work. It merely sidelines the referential meaning to produce further possibilities for perceiving the poem more fully psychologically; studying acousmatic sound in the poetry in this way disregards, however, new critical caveats for close reading and entertains possibilities outside of the text itself.

Hearing beyond the physical into fictive vibratory motion allows for participation from an interlocutor whose auditory imagination moves beyond the poem toward not only what exists in the text but also what could exist beyond it as a result of sonic awareness. The sound object's

perceptual qualities of pitch, loudness, timbre, etc. may be inconsistent in this reading of physical sounds and psychological possibilities using the auditory imagination, but that results as the sounds mirror the individuality of the one listening to them and performing them in recitation. Wordsworth's doctrine supports such possibilities: he writes that a poet "considers man and the objects that surround him as acting and re-acting upon each other, so as to produce an infinite complexity of pain and pleasure" ("Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*" 605).<sup>26</sup> The interlocutor might attempt to imitate the speaker's sounds through the recitation, accepting the psychology of the speaker imagined, yet also voice the poem imaginatively to hear other possibilities for how the poem could be heard. These are the psychological attributes of the physical sound, and both are complementary to one another.

Wordsworth asks for a reflexive subject to participate in the poem in this way through his speaker's address in strophe three to "Ye Voices, and ye Shadows, / And Images of voice . . ." (33-4). In what I read as a veiled and blended discussion on semiotics, the possibilities of sound, affect, and rhythm, the pervading expression is a request for both physical vibratory and fictive motion—first, for its freedom, as these "Voices" and "Shadows" and "Images" are permitted and encouraged to move physically through the "rocky steep and rock-bestudded meadows" (35) and "in the sky's blue caves" (36), and second, for its regulation, as the motion becomes yoked by "the church-tower bells" (37) and ordered to give a "greeting . . . of *measured* glee" (38; emphasis original) because the "bridal symphony" necessitates such (40). An elaborate composition, a sounded "bridal symphony" is stressed here as regulatory to reiterate that while the possibilities in sound are permitted, the voice sounding the poem must attune to the poet's

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<sup>26</sup> See more on this "acting and re-acting" in my analysis of *Peter Bell, a Tale in Verse*, in chapter four.

rhythm, a process of entrainment that I discuss in depth in the following chapter. Sound's purposes in this strophe are not only various but also ritualized, sacred, focused, and controlled. Though sounds are controlled in this way, the speaker of the poem, a symbiotic subject at the center of sound with the freedom of both physical vibratory and fictive motion, gives options for the auditor. The speaker advises "let us rove / Where mists are breaking up or gone" (41-42). The sense here is that if there is harmony with the subject, that harmony can be created in multiple contexts through multiple sound possibilities through the auditor's choices.

Wordsworth makes a case for the importance of these sonic possibilities through the abundant sound figures he includes. The ode becomes an exercise in attention in that the work leads the reader through competing marginal internal and external aural stimuli as represented in language, i.e., sound figures, before allowing the reader to reach any sense of unity. Wordsworth creates a sense of radical discord as he presents the sources and effects of particular sounds, and this discordant musical language is its own unique kind of musicmaking that leads to the universals Wordsworth seeks to produce with the work, such as his "scheme or system for moral interests or intellectual contemplation" mentioned in the ode's opening Argument. The contradiction these sound figures reveal in my reading is the contradiction in attention and distraction I find present not only at the level of form in this ode but also at the level of reader reception. Theodor Adorno states that sound figures "give . . . formal shape to" and "render . . . visible" the "insoluble contradiction implicit in all great music," which is "that of the general and the particular" (9-10). Adorno argues that this shaping and expressing of this contradiction is necessary because "instead of concealing it behind a harmonious façade," music allows it "to find expression," resulting in "reconciling the irreconcilable in an anticipatory image" (10). The anticipatory image in this ode is difficult to define because hermeneutically, the affective forces

produced by sounds are dynamic and readerly surmised, but clearly Wordsworth's anticipatory image is sonic. The cacophonous aural stimuli in the text serve as parts—as *notes*—for what I view as the text's sonic consciousness. Beginning with a direct address, he produces a sound with the sense of loud reverberation. He provides the reader with what seems a lamenting sound and cries but moves them onward to shouts of praise and natural sounds. He shows the relationship of sounds to those listening and how the sounds themselves communicate amongst one another. Wordsworth provides a multisensory experience rooted in sound that moves from particular sounds of the embodied ear to sounds external and revolutionary toward sounds more universal, abstract, immaterial. These abstractions, such as the sounds of "Mercy" (28-29), "Conscience" (97), and "Love" (111), seem absent but are very sonically present if we listen. We hear Wordsworth's Argument, the speaker's direct address to the ear, and the flooding of other sounds, such as the "warbled air" (10), "chains of frenzy" (12), "Hosannas" (14), "the prowling Lion's *Here I am*" (21; emphasis original), "echoes" (39), and the "ditty" (46) of the "Happy Milk-maids" (45). We hear the sounds from the "blind Man's gloom" (50), "the Veteran's mirth" (50), "the Peasant's whistling breath" (51), the "Song" that "lifts the languid oar" for "the tired Slave" (53), "the Prisoner of the Mine, / Who from the well-spring of his own clear breast / Can draw, and sing his griefs to rest" (62-64), revolutionary "Inspiration" (67) as it "Mounts with a tune" (68) for "civic regeneration" (65), mythical sounds from "The pipe of Pan" (145), pastoral "Shepherds" (145), sounds of "terror, joy, or pity" (161), sounds from the "one pervading Spirit / Of tones and numbers" (177-78), the "Voice" that "to Light gave Being" (209), and "the WORD, that shall not pass away" (224). Such a concentration of sounds moving from particulars to universals supports the sense of a soundstream at work aesthetically in the poem, and the acoustic ecology created through this intensive sonic ambiance cannot be overlooked. The

disquiet soundstream thus functions through its variation of sounds and can be perpetually reproduced in variation through readerly perception and recitation.

Considering these sound figures categorially might solely mean that Wordsworth pushes a concrete agenda, such as that of religiosity, through his attention to sound, but if we take the language and consider what it offers precategorially, such as when speech is recognized as nonspeech through the poetic mode, we gather more information about how the sounds of the language work to create affect beyond something as obvious as mere religiosity and more toward the political implications of close listening, of self-vocalization, of the freedoms associated with independent listening and hearing, and of concealing the thoughts language sometimes reveals in our own private moment of contemplation. We then recognize the importance in ambiguity that attending to sounds offers, an ambiguity that allows one to attend as one wishes, to drown out pervasive soundscapes, and to find the silence needed for intellectual contemplation or privacy.

It is not my intent to establish one conclusive reading in this chapter but to suggest the multiple possibilities for Wordsworth's poetry when considered in the context of recitation. In thinking through the physiological, physical, and psychological powers of hearing and listening through historical insights into sound, cognitive poetics, and English linguistics, we can imagine the possibilities of sounds and what might exist beyond the physical soundstream into the psychological soundscape. Cognitive poetics reminds us that these physical soundstreams and psychological soundscapes are always simultaneous. There are always exceptions and more possibilities to what is cognitively possible when the overlap that exists is considered between speech and nonspeech, i.e., when not all speech is processed as speech and not all nonspeech is processed as nonspeech. Tsur's poetic mode serves to remind us that not all interlocutors categorize information during communication in the same way. Possibilities exist in the text of



the poem that are without language but are full of sensory information—feeling—and the perception of this precategorical sensory information is as significant as the language labeled for rapid categorization.

Taking this knowledge into consideration, the uncertainties in language and thought that accompany our academic dismissal of recitation resuscitate our inquiry into Romantic poetry's relationship to affect and audience through sound, which I explore throughout this dissertation. In the next chapter, I build on my previous claims to create a theoretical approach to Wordsworth that blends hearing/acoustics/psychoacoustics with attention/distraction, speech, cognition, and body movement. These several elements work together in recitation and in reading, and with this approach, I make a case for how Wordsworth, during composition and recitation, might have remembered, engaged, performed, and held audience attention. To that end, I explore Elfenbein's notion of "percussive Romanticism, in which a pounding regularity of meter does the work of voice" (195). I draw from John Thelwall's elocutionary philosophies and consider possibilities for Wordsworth's live delivery. I also entertain the likelihood that Wordsworth undertook both a pedagogical and bardic role as a poet in the social sphere through a brief analysis of "Mutability." Through my reading of "The Idiot Boy," a poem representing characters I envision as readers Wordsworth might have imagined, I suggest too that Wordsworth reimagined notions of idiocy as refined sensibility and anticipated an inclusive interpretive community for his poetry.

## CHAPTER 2

### WORDSWORTHIAN RECITATION: MOTION AND ATTENTION

Wordsworth lived almost forty years of his life at Rydal Mount. During this time, among other responsibilities, he entertained guests, spent time with his family and friends, composed poetry, and landscaped his expansive garden. These activities together helped Wordsworth produce his later poetry. His composition processes are wrapped up in the moments of mediation between local contexts both public and private, during which there were moments of entertaining, composition, and landscaping, and these material moments were not isolated times for the poet. They were not silent moments replete with seclusion and individualism but were rather sonic, social, and integrative, wherein Wordsworth fused together different parts of his life to create a whole—his unifying verse. Therefore, in what follows, I review past mediating moments of both Wordsworth’s composition practices and his recitation experiences to illustrate the poet not as some grand, inaccessible, monumental figure full of what John Keats dubbed the “egotistical sublime” but as more of an ordinary writer in his community pursuing his craft in his physical environment—a poet as enmeshed with his poetry as with his garden at Rydal Mount.

This community poet persona shows up as poet-narrator in several of Wordsworth’s poems. His presence seems to have been either reproduced from Wordsworth’s own composition and recitation persona or constructed through an awareness of his composition and recitation

practices and experiences as a parodic sort of Bakhtinian hybrid. In my view, Wordsworth's composition and recitation practices offer critical insight for framing such a persona as the poet-narrator who not only constructs the indirect voice representations of others in the poem but also performs the mediation between recitation (i.e., text) and reader-listener-performer (i.e., reader). By acknowledging the authority of this persona, with his voice as the means of binding together the public mind, and his dialogic obligations, we can further evaluate Wordsworth's strategic considerations of narrative motion and attention. We can imagine this poet-narrator walking while he composes with his voice existing in dual soundscapes—both the sonic environment of the recitation and beyond it in the acoustic ecology of the reader-listener-performer—pacing off rhythms to maintain focus through the fluctuating narrative activity just as Wordsworth himself had done.

In this chapter, I argue for a theory of reading and understanding Wordsworth's poetry that acknowledges the pragmatic, local context surrounding his poetic composition process as a substantial thread in the fabric of not only his verse composition but also how others might have received it in the Romantic period and still receive it in the present. Through a consideration of both post-Enlightenment theories of attention and distraction and modern-day cognitive science and psychophysics, I further my claims about hearing, acoustics, psychoacoustics, and speech from the previous chapter and conceptualize how Wordsworth, during composition and recitation, might have remembered, engaged, performed, and held audience attention. I attempt in my work to move beyond unidimensional notions of poetic modality in print toward experiencing poetry through aural modes, as others experienced Wordsworth's poems in the Romantic period as he composed them, recited them, and shared them with others based on the evidence of contemporary records of his recitations. Studying Wordsworth's poetry in this way

reveals driving rhythms through underlying acoustical structures, and these rhythms synchronize with biological rhythms of readers of verse and result in the direction and redirection of attention, much in the way Wordsworth's voice did when he performed his recitations and composed aloud for any listening audience. Such sound patterns reinforce that an audience should pay close attention. In constructing this theory, I acknowledge Andrew Elfenbein's notion of "percussive Romanticism, in which a pounding regularity of meter does the work of voice" (195) and draw from elocutionary science to consider possibilities for Wordsworth's live delivery, linking his manner of recitation to John Thelwall's philosophies and my own theoretical approach. I entertain the likelihood that Wordsworth undertook both a pedagogical and bardic role as a poet in the social sphere through a brief analysis of "Mutability," and through my reading of "The Idiot Boy," I envision readers Wordsworth might have imagined and suggest that Wordsworth both reimagined notions of idiocy as refined sensibility and anticipated an inclusive interpretive community for his poetry.

Wordsworth's poetic circumstances and material experiences unite during his composition practices, which took place at times, as I have previously mentioned, as he walked through physical landscapes. Carol Buchanan suggests that the Rydal Mount garden's "primary features are the terraces," and she notes that these were constructed for Wordsworth's "habits of composition" (138). Buchanan describes with great detail "the chain of rock pools he put in with stones placed strategically to vary the sound of water [,] the stone steps, and inscriptions on stone" (138).<sup>27</sup> From her work, we can see that Wordsworth was quite deliberate in the fashioning of his physical environment, constructing it through not only attention to sights and

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<sup>27</sup> In a chapter on Rydal Mount, Christopher Wordsworth describes in detail the garden and terraces as they existed in June 1850 shortly after Wordsworth's death. *Memoirs of William Wordsworth, Poet-Laureate, D.C.L. in Two Volumes*, vol. 1, Edward Moxon, Dover Street, 1851.

sounds in water but also terrain and media. He managed the visual scenes of water around him with the placement of the rock pools in addition to the auditory scenes being created by the sounds these pools would produce. Seemingly attuned to the necessity of multimodality in the totality of experience, he embedded textual inscriptions to read at various places within the already-engaging visual and auditory scenes.

Creating a complex landscape and soundscape through the construction of these terraces, Wordsworth placed stone steps as desired to direct the kind of maneuvering he would have to do to see and to hear in particular places on these grounds. Buchanan explains that Wordsworth walked these “four long, interconnected terraces” as he needed to “when the poetic impulse overtook him” (138). She observes that the terraces were “leveled and smoothed for pacing off the rhythms of Wordsworth’s poems,” acknowledging that “[p]assersby, especially on the Coffin Trail lying just the other side of the wall, could clearly hear him in the throes of poetic composition as he paced along, loudly chanting the words in time with his feet, in his Westmoreland accent” (Buchanan 154). Undoubtedly, the control he practiced planning these terraces and the other details of these spaces allowed him to design visual and auditory environments he found most pleasurable or most suitable to his composition needs, rhythmic and otherwise. Such planning and design make him the creator of specific spatial and acoustic data in nature that he can manipulate for the purposes of conceptualizing for poetic composition, data that he will embody himself in the process of composition and infuse into the embodied experiences of others who listened to him recite or reconstruct his recitations through their own.

During a brief visit to Ambleside in the summer of 2017, I toured the grounds at Rydal Mount to walk these terraces for myself. These are not imagined, poeticized landscapes. At that time, a plaque in The Summer House, located in the upper section of the sloping terrace was

posted to remind visitors of Wordsworth's habits, stating, "It is here that Wordsworth would sit to compose his verse. He also passed through The Summer House to the far terrace where he would recite his verse aloud while pacing to and fro." I hiked the Coffin Trail and explored these terraces, "pacing to and fro," as Wordsworth was wont to do (C. Wordsworth 22). While no terrain proved difficult to navigate, moving from one slope to the next on the terraces, with their steep inclines and angular stone steps, at times, required some physical exertion, careful focus, and deep breaths. The terraces, as the house does, sit on the sloping side of Nab Scar above Rydal Water, and the well-shaded pathways and vegetation-populated steps required that close attention be paid while traversing the landscape. As I walked the grounds, I imagined that along with such constructed spatial and acoustic data, this physical exertion, deep breathing, and paying of attention were common parts to Wordsworth's poetic composition and could be useful for thinking through not only his process of composing his poetry but also our process of reading it. These practical matters and this local context offer critical insight into Wordsworth's process and prompt today's readers to reevaluate conceptions of reading his poetry.

The pragmatic, local context surrounding Wordsworth's poetry is significant because it at once provides the framework necessary for reimagining his poetry through our own experiences of embodiment and for revitalizing the embodied contexts of Wordsworth during the Romantic period. Maurice Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) "proposes a phenomenological approach that situates human experience *between* the physiological and psychological, which he finds in being-in-the-world and embodiment" (Thomas, Bracken, and Leudar 17). In a reading of Wordsworth's poetry through this framework, we can move toward a fuller understanding of Wordsworth's relationship to his poetic project by moving beyond theories of mind that "divorce . . . the inner world of the mind and the external world," replacing

“the epistemological relationship of subject and object with the ontological ‘being-in-the-world’” to understand poetry more within actual “human contexts” and pursue poetry in discovery of “how human beings relate to the world” (Thomas, Bracken, and Leudar 16). We can understand poetry through not only the situatedness of the present, within our own soundscapes and circumstances, but also that of the past, during Wordsworth’s own experiential moment.

Additionally, by considering the situatedness of actual context, we get a glimpse of how Wordsworth’s local audience viewed him within their own contextual sphere. Reverend Canon Rawnsley collected evidence from among the Westmoreland peasantry that proves the locals were listening to Wordsworth recite his verse; he “was not always successful in passing” by others unobserved during his moments of composing (S. Heaney 3). He had somewhat of a local reputation, according to an informant of Rawnsley’s who remembered his voice and how it affected others in his presence:

‘But there was anudder thing as kep’ fwoaks off, he hed a terr’ble girt deep voice. I’ve knoan folks, village lads and lasses, coming ower by t’auld road aboon what runs fra Grasmer to Rydal, flay’t a’most to death there by t’ Wishing Gate to hear t’ girt voice a groanin’ and mutterin’ and thunderin’ of a still evening. And he had a way of standin’ quite still by t’ rock there in t’ path under Rydal, and fwoaks could hear sounds like a wild beast coming frat’ rocks, and childer were scared fit to be dead a’most.’ (qtd. in S. Heaney 4)

Such descriptions of Wordsworth’s recitations in nature connect his voice to the natural landscape of his local community and characterize him as a sublime figure to some of the inhabitants or passersby. Whether Wordsworth knew that others were listening and watching him in public is hard to say, but his habits of composing aloud outdoors left memorable impressions. From just this recollection, we can understand that Wordsworth’s great voice sliced through the quiet of the evenings as he recited outdoors so much so that he frightened some of the locals who were listening. Whether this recitation was for composing or rehearsing a poem he might

perform elsewhere, we can start here to put together the pieces of what his voice might have sounded like within the sonic environment of his local community. A deep, thundering moan of a voice that recited loudly reverberated through the landscape not language everyone could clearly make out but an astonishing soundstream that startled them—making them feel. If we consider these recitative moments through the poetic mode of perception, this voice no doubt articulated linguistically and nonlinguistically, with its audience encountering the different acoustic signals of language (i.e., speech) and prosody (i.e., nonspeech) simultaneously and perceiving and attending to the sonic event through both categorial and precategorial sensory information. Controlling the attention of his interlocutors, Wordsworth too was probably also enchanted during such a sonic event, focusing his attention much in the same way as this account preserves through the description of his ““way of standin’ quite still by t’ rock,”” unaffected by those around him and completely engrossed in his embodied and created soundstream as well as the already-existent natural sonic environment (qtd. in S. Heaney 4).

Susan Stewart claims that poetry demands that we pay attention to sound, and the voice of the poet produces an utterance we should consider because we connect with the rhythm of such in the body. She says that “we are always *recalling* sound with only some regard to an originating auditory experience” (68; emphasis original). The “poem is an utterance,” and “we are interested in attending to both *what* the poem says and *how* the poem says as part of a semantic orientation in perception” (Stewart 68-9; emphasis original). And since we are unable to reconstruct the “auditory conditions of the poem’s production, our recalling will always have a dimension of imagination” (Stewart 69). We imagine the poem we see before us by hearing it for ourselves through our own perception of physical and/or psychophysical sounds, and Mari Riess Jones states that the underlying acoustical structures function as driving rhythms, bringing our



biological rhythms into synchronization (322-23). According to Reinhart Meyer-Kalkus, such natural “body-based rhythms . . . have great relevance above all in musical performances, as well as in . . . spoken poetry” (168). Meyer-Kalkus notes that “[w]hat fuses the heard and the seen” in such performances “is primarily the kinaesthetic dimension that takes possession of viewers and listeners and that indeed . . . becomes a bodily reality for them” (168). Essentially, “[w]hat grabs . . . us and takes us out of ourselves is the coordinated rhythm of tones and motions” (Meyer-Kalkus 168). This coordination happens when we as readers connect bodily to the rhythms poets create through verse as we hear and/or perceive sound psychologically. As this synchronization happens, readers essentially harmonize with the poets through utterances and motions, much like Johnny Foy’s own perception illustrates in “The Idiot Boy,” as he experiences getting on the horse for what is for him probably the first time and feels intense emotion during such an affective event. Certainly such a first was indeed a poetry of its own kind, and he connected bodily to the intensity of perhaps his own racing heart. As “His lips with joy they burr” (19), a sort of coordinated rhythm of tones and motions reveals a kinesthetic dimension once Betty Foy positions him on the horse:

There is no need of boot or spur,  
There is no need of whip or wand,  
For Johnny has his holly-bough,  
And with a hurly-burly now  
He shakes the green bough in his hand. (57-61)

These utterances and the motoric realities associated with them can issue from the poets’ original textual or live recitation events, yet they may also be reimagined by readers-listeners-performers in reproduced representations of Romantic recitation.

Oliver Sacks suggested that this relationship between auditory and motor systems seems consistently universal for humans. In *Musicophilia* (2007), he claims that “research has now

shown that so-called responses to rhythm actually *precede* the external beat,” adding that we “anticipate the beat, we get rhythmic patterns as soon as we hear them, and we establish internal models or templates of them,” which are “astonishingly precise and stable” (Sacks 240; emphasis original). Essentially what this research reinforces is that we internalize templates of rhythm patterns, and if we anticipate beats internally and respond before hearing rhythms externally, then the rhythms of poetry are sort of universally coded within our cognitive architecture. Therefore, focusing on rhythms created in poetry is important to understand not only our individual sensory and motor systems but also our relationship to others through their sensory and motor systems. Sacks claims that brain imaging research shows that “listening to music or imagining it, even without any overt movement or keeping time, activates motor cortex and subcortical motor systems, too,” and even “the imagination of music, of rhythm, may be as potent, neurally, as actually listening to it” (241). This possibility can be further considered for evaluating the neural benefits of poetry on bodies unable not only to hear but also to move. Bodies much like Johnny Foy’s, at times “still and mute” (91). This connection between sound and movement reinforces the importance of studying poetry and its cognitive and motor possibilities through the lens of disability studies and potentially deaf poetics. Studying sonicity and motion could also further illuminate how we might perceive and attend to others’ rhythms.

Wordsworth’s synchronized walking, speaking, and taking in of experiences while composing and remembering verses all required a great deal of attention, and similar attention is demanded from an audience experiencing the sound of his poetry through synchronization and imagination. Jones in her research into Dynamic Attending Theory claims that “regular (versus irregular) rhythms elicit anticipatory attending that targets narrower, more focused, bursts of attentional energy” (327). In this moment of synchronization, the audience’s attention becomes

more focused on melodies, which, according to Jones, “project a series of spacelike distances over time, meaning that they may be experienced as pitch motion” (327). In theory, the audience’s attentional impulse is quite possibly connecting to the poet’s very own in these kinesthetic moments, uniting the poet and audience not only through focus but also sound and rhythm. Jones’s work reinforces how sound patterns control attention. As listeners “react to sound patterns,” she writes, they “seem to ‘keep time’ effortlessly with the common patterns of speech and music,” resulting in the direction and redirection of attention according to rhythms (Jones 317). Jones calls this process entrainment, which, in living beings, describes “a pairing of a *driving rhythm with a driven, biological, rhythm*” (322-23; emphasis original). This synchronizing of driving rhythms and driven biological rhythms happens as we read poetry and listen closely to its sound patterns and the way we respond to them. Because Romantic poetry in its time was “a strongly ‘temporal’ and oral art—an art realized in time by the voice” (Perkins 656), we must consider Wordsworth’s poetry and its possible effects on the body and the mind of his audience—then and now—and reiterate associations of his poetic utterances and recitations as mediating poetry and music. We must also examine how Wordsworth strategically uses sound patterns and rhythms to maintain his own focus, to get and keep attention, and to drive readers’ bodies and minds during recitation.

Wordsworth’s outdoor audiences were not the only ones who could glimpse his recitative side; his indoor audiences and private habits of recitation also reveal how attentively he concentrated on the performance of his work and how seemingly unaffected he was by a potential listening audience. Another of Rawnsley’s informants describes what it was like indoors while Wordsworth was at work at home:

‘Mrs. Wudsworth would say, ‘Ring the bell,’ but he wouldn’t stir, bless ye, ‘Goa and see what he’s doing,’ she’d say, and we wad goa up to study door and hear

him a mumbling and bumming through hit. ‘Dinner’s ready, sir,’ I’d ca’ out, but he’d goa mumbling on like a deaf man, ya see. And sometimes Mrs. Wordsworth ‘ud say, ‘Goa and brek a bottle, or let a dish fall just outside door in passage.’ Eh dear, that maistly wad bring him out, wad that.’ (qtd. in S. Heaney 4)

These various testimonies imply that Wordsworth could remain quite focused while others attempted to disrupt his process and suggest he was a poet simultaneously seeking isolation in moments of composition yet publicly sharing these moments with others who might overhear in public spaces. He performed his verse orally, and whether intentional or not, he addressed both indoor and outdoor audiences—even if these audiences were only invoked and imaginary, and he, as well as these spectators, responded to his performances.

Wordsworth’s local audience glimpsed the poet in process, and their view of his poetry and method of composition reveals not only elements of his development but also the expectations he might have had for recitation as well as his style of reciting. From these accounts, he sought after some sense of isolation, but he was mobile in that seeking—moving at times beyond working from his study at Rydal Mount and The Summer House—to locate places outdoors where he could listen to his performance, perhaps to practice modulating the pitch of his voice or concentrate on some other element of the verse. According to Perkins, “rhythm, inflection or modulation of pitch, force or volume of enunciation, duration of syllables, vowels, and pause,” were elements of verse music, and these elements were undoubtedly part of Wordsworth’s focus during both his outdoor and indoor recitations (663). Perhaps, as he was pacing the grounds, Wordsworth was listening to himself practice these elements in open air to hear and discern for himself how that inflection might travel through the air to others who were listening outdoors.

Several scholars have commented on his recitation, and speculating about the aural aspect of Wordsworth’s oral poetry is important. Perkins infers that “when Wordsworth recited verse,

he accented with a downward inflection” (663). This inflection was most certainly one of the elements of his verse music that he practiced while walking the grounds. These public performances have been documented, and the chanting style he was known to use is well remembered. William Hazlitt recalls Wordsworth’s recitation style as one with the “habitual use” of “a *chaunt*” that “acts as a spell upon the hearer, and disarms the judgment,” noting also that Wordsworth’s style was “equable, sustained, and internal”—and in fact “*lyrical*” (41; emphasis original). Taking his listeners by surprise with the style of his sound, Wordsworth’s composure during this chanting held his audience entranced. Perkins writes that Wordsworth’s chanting was “not a universal practice, since Hazlitt makes a point of it,” and clarifies that Hazlitt must have found Wordsworth’s style somewhat “old fashioned,” as “he must have maintained the regularity of the rhythm and integrity of the line” much like the “style descending from the Augustan period” (657). In this manner, he would have promoted the stress of lines aloud “to sustain a regular beat” using his voice (Perkins 657). Though we cannot reconstruct his voice and have no audio of these performances, we can imagine the vocal personality at work during his recitations by reenacting them for ourselves and by listening to the voices at work in Wordsworth’s poetry. Wordsworth’s reciting vocal personality makes its way into his poetry through the characters’ voices, and in particular, through poet-narrators. Later in this chapter, I suggest that the poet-narrator and his indirect voice representations in “The Idiot Boy” resonate as echoes of Wordsworth’s own voice.

Based on what we know about Wordsworth’s stylized and almost musical performances, we can consider the musicality in his inflection. While some contemporary reports suggest the Romantic “poets . . . failed utterly in the instances where they . . . attempted the composition of songs” (“Song-Writers” 273), “the prominence of inflection” in Wordsworth’s recitation, and in

British speech generally, “would make it seem especially musical to us” (Perkins 663). I say this not to enter a debate about the differences, philosophical and otherwise, between poetry and song but to suggest that with his modulation, he created sounds akin to music and song during his recitation of language. Steven Holden writes about how the “physical experience of hearing” poems through “a dramatic recitation lends them another dimension”; he says, “[t]hey become performances, in which the poet’s vocal personality becomes as significant as the words being read, sometimes more so” (2). Holden further acknowledges that “when you add music, the boundaries between poetry and song begin to fade” (2). For some, this delivery enhances the poetry, and for all intents and purposes, I suggest conceptualizing Wordsworth’s delivery in this way could make Wordsworth more accessible—to others at this time and to more during our own.

Nevertheless, while the possible musicality in his timbre during delivery might have pleased his audience then, it sometimes had an offensive effect due to the loudness with which it was delivered, and his strong voice and manner of recitation were not always well received or preferred. Though this was not the case with Hazlitt, who describes Wordsworth with esteem as someone who “talked very naturally and freely, with a mixture of clear gushing accents in his voice, a deep guttural intonation, and a strong tincture of the northern *burr*,” such deep sounds did not please all (41; emphasis original). Dorothy Wordsworth wrote to Sara Hutchinson in 1815 about one occasion when Wordsworth’s booming voice could not be endured by an elderly woman:

‘William and Mary and little Willy paid a visit to old Mrs Knott yesterday with the Ex[cursio]n in hand, William intending to read to the old Lady the history of the Grasmere Knight. *She could not hear his loud voice*; but understood the story very well when her Niece read it, and was greatly delighted.’ (qtd. in “Record Number: 1522”; emphasis added)

Mrs. Knott might have been responding to the recitation because of the loudness of Wordsworth's voice, but her preference in her niece reading the text could have been due to the affective force of the sound of Wordsworth's recitation. She might have preferred not to hear the text performed aloud with the intensity that Wordsworth showed in his rendering. It could be that the "loud voice" made the moment more solemn than she intended. Perhaps in having the child, little Willy, around, she wanted the occasion to be lighter. Thus, the change in reader, from Wordsworth's booming voice to a softer voice, shifted the tone of the experience to produce a more pleasing response. Chen Gafni and Reuven Tsur define "softened voice" as "an umbrella term describing the subjective psychological perception associated with certain vocal manipulations" (463). In their research, they "attempt to establish a connection between acoustic features and perceptual qualities in listening to vocal performance of poetry" (Gafni and Tsur 474). They study the acoustic properties of voice qualities as poetry is read aloud, connect such to emotive expression, and show that the "perception of 'softness'" is indeed a "psychological reality"; their findings reveal that "any signs of breathy voice are enough to render . . . [a] voice soft" (Gafni and Tsur 474-75). Gafni and Tsur assert that "low intensity" reading affects perception and can be "a significant cue for softness" (475). From this research, we can conjecture that Wordsworth's voice was most likely neither breathy nor low intensity. Therefore, the subjective psychoacoustic effect of Wordsworth's loud voice on Mrs. Knott produced likely less pleasure than the softened voice of her niece as she recited the poem. Mrs. Knott is merely one listener who failed to appreciate recitation in the Wordsworthian style; there were others.

Some listeners mocked others' recitations of Wordsworth's poetry, blaming the style of recitation directly on Wordsworth himself and his instruction regarding the reader's power to modulate. In an 1829 essay in *Blackwood's*, those performing recitations of Wordsworth's

poetry, termed “spouting Wordsworthian[s],” were described as having “a mode of recitation so singular”:

Reader, didst thou ever hear a Wordsworthian spout poetry? . . . In compliance (as I suppose) with their master’s wishes, who declares that ‘ . . . he requires nothing more than an animated or impassioned recitation adapted to the subject;’ and that the reader must not be ‘deprived of a voluntary power to modulate, *in subordination to the sense*, the music of the poem;’ taking a hint also, I imagine, from Wordsworth’s description of the poet’s privilege to

‘Murmur near the running brooks

A music sweeter than their own,’

they part chant, part speak, part murmur, part mouth (with many a rise and fall and dying cadence) all poetry, but more especially Wordsworth’s poetry, after an unimaginable manner—whether in subordination to the sense it were hard to determine.” (“An Essay” 775-76; emphasis original)

Reciters of his poems in this excerpt are derided with outright condescension, and from the essay, it is clear that the writer was overall equally unsupportive of Wordsworth’s poetic greatness. While it is important to unravel the threads of what others found astonishing or displeasing about Wordsworth’s recitations—and *Wordsworthian* recitations—it is equally important to think critically about the kind of recitation Wordsworth sought to deliver—and why—as well as the kind of reader-listener-performer he envisioned.

Wordsworth understood the importance of recitation and the impact an affective recitation could make on the audience, having had himself overwhelming experiences with others’ performances. He had a rather sublime experience at Benjamin Robert Haydon’s during a recitation from Italian poet and lecturer Ugo Foscolo. The experience is detailed in the *Life and Letters of William Bewick* and excerpted as follows:

Haydon’s small parlour seemed too confined for the voice, or for the violent gesticulation, of Signor Foscolo. Wordsworth appeared *astounded* as the Italian proceeded with the description of himself, and seemed to be wondering to what excess this unexpected phrenetic display would lead; and when the poet came to the last four lines, in which the letter *r* is rather frequent, our English poet seemed *moved to fear*, and *opened his mouth and eyes, gasping for breath, so startling was the effect* of the shrill trumpet-like voice of the speaker, as it vibrated,



sonorous or deep, with the rough sound of the letter *r* rumbling in his throat or rattling on his tongue. The ladies fluttered in tremulous agitation, looking at each other, not without alarm, as this strange original was acting his wild part before them, throwing himself into all the contortions of which his pliant body was capable, while his voice and expression were equally variable and intense; his ‘intent and deep-sunk eyes’ darting like lightning, burning in anger, or melting in pensive softness, as occasion required. . . . *Wordsworth was silent and absorbed.* The exhibition, altogether, seemed *too much for him*; whether it was the *difficulty he might feel* with the Italian language, or that he was *puzzled and thrown out of his usual ideas of a quiet chanting mode of recitation* . . . . [Foscolo] seemed unable to speak or converse at all unless he was upon his feet, giving loose to all the parts of his body at once; and as his thoughts prompted the utterances of his tongue, his whole frame followed in the wake of that marvellous organ; and the louder he spoke, the more violent was the action of his various members. (Bewick 78-81; emphasis added)

Bewick recounts what was clearly a memorable performance, to say the least, and goes on to provide additional details about how the night ended—with a heated metaphysical dispute on the nature of man and disinterestedness and with Foscolo’s clenched fist very close to Wordsworth’s face. Wordsworth’s response to Foscolo’s recitation seems oddly comparable to the responses previously described from Mrs. Knott and the Westmoreland peasantry who were probably likewise “astounded,” “moved to fear,” “gasping for breath,” “startl[ed],” “silent and absorbed,” “puzzled and thrown out of . . . usual ideas” by Wordsworth’s own recitations (Bewick 78-81). Certainly, this kind of recitation emanates not from emotion recollected in tranquility.<sup>28</sup>

I quote at length from Bewick to distinguish his account of the Foscolo recitation from his recollection of Wordsworth’s. According to Bewick, Wordsworth was accustomed to “a quiet chanting mode of recitation” (80) and had “a rugged harmony in the tones of his voice” (90):

His manner of reading his own poetry is *particularly imposing*; and in his favorite passages *his eye beams with preternatural lustre*, and the *meaning labours slowly*

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<sup>28</sup> On the trustworthiness of “impressionistic, enthusiastic, and bardolatrous” (656-57) descriptions of Romantic recitations, and for more about Romantic recitation generally, see David Perkins’s “How the Romantics Recited Poetry.” *Studies in English Literature*, vol. 31, no. 4, 1991, pp. 655-71.

*up from his swelling breast.* No one who has seen him at these moments could go away with an impression that he was a ‘man of no mark or likelihood.’ Perhaps the comment of his face and voice is necessary to convey a full idea of his poetry. His *language may not be intelligible*, but his manner is not to be mistaken. It is clear that he is either *mad or inspired*. . . . He shone most (because *he seemed most roused and animated*) in reciting his own poetry. (Bewick 90-91; emphasis added)

This account of Wordsworth’s recitation reveals his impressive, passionate delivery as one during which the rhythms of the body are observable through its breathing, as the “meaning labours slowly up from his swelling breast” (Bewick 90). In what seems an almost otherworldly reverie, as “his eye beams with preternatural lustre” (Bewick 90), he acts upon the listener and authorizes feeling by his presentation of both referential and nonreferential sonic possibilities of language.

That Wordsworth’s language itself is described by Bewick as “not . . . intelligible” could suggest that his method of delivery made it more difficult to understand the language, or the meaning of the words might not be understood since the words themselves might not have even been heard (90-91). This description further supports the importance of understanding Wordsworth’s poetry through the poetic mode and precatatorial perception, both of which I defined in detail in chapter one. Wordsworth’s, at times, unintelligible recitations included murmurings—nonreferential sounds—igniting and thus preserving interior performances of sorts in listeners, making them readers-listeners-performers during the recitation who were quite possibly filling in linguistic gaps or processing his unintelligible language as nonspeech (91). This unintelligibility would allow the attentive reader-listener-performer to have an embodied experience of the verse and take part in the recitation even if that participation was only interior. Such a performance forces the engagement of readers-listeners-performers to make the aesthetic event not only one of reception but also of creation, and Wordsworth transfuses the act of

categorial and precategorial perception in such a process from himself to his interlocutors. In this education of the passions, Wordsworth creates affect beyond the semantic content of the poem and “convey[s] a full idea of his poetry” to leave impact of lasting magnitude and to invite his audience to participate in the making of the poem in a sense (Bewick 91). Joshua Steele envisioned this kind of reader of print in his *Essay and Prosodia Rationalis*:

[T]he reader of such *printed* symbols is understood to be not only a reader who processes printed text in a silent, sonic vacuum, but a *reader-listener, who is able to hear what is being communicated in print within his or her mind’s eye. This reader-listener is often cast as a reader-listener-performer, whom the writer anticipates will rehearse the sounds captured within the text . . .* (Chao 258; emphasis added)

While Steele’s focus is on how the reader might process the “printed text in a silent, sonic vacuum,” much of this can be appropriated for readers of multimodal texts, whose possibilities promote understanding equal to and beyond unidimensional notions of printed words on a page and the mind’s eye toward experiencing it through other semiotic modes. Wordsworth was not only this kind of reader-listener-performer during recitation but also would have sought the same kind of readers-listeners-performers in his audiences.

In considering his movement and voicing through recitation in this way, we get glimpses of how the moment of recitation compels his reading-listening-performing audience to think, feel, and move just as it functions as the impetus pushing Wordsworth forward. The audiences were responding, as Hartley Coleridge pointed out in 1830:

‘it must delight every lover of mankind to see how the influence of Wordsworth’s poetry is diverging, spreading over society, benefitting [sic] the heart and soul of the Species, and indirectly operating on thousands, who haply, never read, or will read, a single page of his fine Volumes.’ (qtd. in “Record Number: 33914”)

What makes this entry in the *United Kingdom Reading Experience Database* stand out is that the note following the end of the record clarifies that while H. Coleridge was reading a print form of

the text when he made the comment, he was “also referring to a ‘reading’ of W. Wordsworth’s poetry outside of any form of text” (qtd. in “Record Number: 33914”). I take this to mean that the impact of his poetry and the sounds reverberating from his voice were beyond the confines of printed words on a page. His reputation preceded him; others were aware of his habits of oral composition and recitation. Those who were aware of his general reputation acknowledged the impact of his verse and communicated about his process and poetry often. Friends and family like D. Wordsworth and Fenwick witnessed and listened to his recitations in the private sphere, and local peasantry and others both saw and heard him locally walking and composing.

From various accounts, we can imagine his affecting performances during recitations to be much like those during poetic composition on the grounds of Rydal Mount. As Wordsworth walks and composes, deeply breathing through each stride, arms swinging down at his sides, swaying through what Hazlitt called his “roll” or “lounge in his gait” (40), he recites lines he has written while sitting and/or pacing and adds sounds and language—speech and nonspeech—that might help further the verse composition. Placeholders of murmurings sustain him through the landscape until he can reconsider words, the ends of lines, etc. and carry him through the passion of the meter. The murmurings serve in this capacity as both acoustic and psychoacoustic pressure disturbances—referential and nonreferential entities of momentum—that allow for heightened contemplation, resounding the inflection of the voice and intensifying feeling.

Wordsworth’s sonic poetic delivery requires close attention and multifocality from his reading-listening-performing audience, but in this regard, it also serves to distract his audience from temporal, material conditions. Listeners to the recitation who take part in the performances by segmenting the soundstream realize that these moments of audition can also become moments of distraction from aspects of the soundstream in the present. As readers-listeners-performers

simultaneously segment physical and psychophysical soundstream possibilities when they focus on Wordsworth's poetry, this moment of focus creates for them a welcomed occasion of distraction from other material considerations. The segmenting of the soundstream includes the delayed or rapid categorization of categorial or precategorial sensory information as well as an entering into the spirit of the poem to participate in the phonatory act of articulation I discussed in the last chapter. These multiple processes were involved in the original experience of the recitation for Wordsworth during his peripatetic moment of composition, and they are perpetuated for current readers-listeners-performers.

During recitation, while the reader-listener-performer participates in the process, poetry's dialectical relationship with both individual and collective becomes activated in material conditions.<sup>29</sup> The pause is generative and dynamic, and during the so-called pause, there is action. In the aesthetic moment, the audience synthesizes self and other as they listen and reflect. In her work on attention and distraction, Natalie Phillips discusses a rhetoric of attention in the eighteenth-century and explains negotiations of how writers were accommodating wandering minds—those with what she designates “cognitive drift” (33). Her work highlights that “[n]arratives of distraction” could “sustain concentration” (32). The recitation of poetry functions in a similar way—not only distracting but also sustaining concentration. Phillips connects her thinking to that of Mikhail Bakhtin, who writes in “The Dialogic Imagination” that

‘[t]he living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socioideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue.’ (qtd. in Phillips 32)

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<sup>29</sup> For more on how “poems . . . establish . . . material conditions,” see Jerome McGann's explanation of Galvano della Volpe's notion of “*dialectical paraphrase*” (148; emphasis original). *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation*. U of Chicago P, 1983, pp. 147-60.

So, during these moments, Wordsworth democratizes the experience of the recitation and ignites in his audience their own sense of power over the moment. They begin to think and feel on their own through the experience of both physical vibratory motion and fictive vibratory motion. This sense of liberation in these instances where poetry is produced in concrete locations with audiences, and especially those audiences in the community who might live in isolation, such as the likes of some of the characters we see in Wordsworth's poetry, encourages participants to consider themselves as more connected and substantial and more able to negotiate their own situated experiences in culture.

In these moments, readers-listeners-performers connect with his delivery no matter the rhythmic regularity. In his delivery, Wordsworth could both "sustain a regular beat" (Perkins 657) and "let his accents fall irregularly" in the conveyance of passion (Perkins 657); in his 1804 letter to John Thelwall, he acknowledged that this inconsistency could affect his listeners in diverse ways:

I can scarcely say that I admit any limits to the dislocation of the verse, that is I know none that may not be justified by some passion or other. I speak in general terms. The most dislocated line I know in my writing . . . is this in the Cumberland Beggar. 'Impressed on the white road in the same line' which taken by itself has not the sound of a verse . . . The words to which the passion is att[ached?] are white road same line and the verse dislocates [for the] sake of these. This will please or displ[ease by th]e quantity of feeling excited by the image, to those in whom it excites [such? much?] feeling, as in one it will be musical to others not. (W. Wordsworth and D. Wordsworth, *The Collected Letters* . . . 434-35)

These dislocated patterns of rhythm and regular ones are delivered according to the passion, which could vary depending on excitement and feeling. These varying patterns and how they are received by an audience depend on the attention abilities of those in the audience and on Wordsworth's own ability to attend or become distracted during recitation as he performs or is led by the sense of the lines during his live delivery.

Whether in recitation or print, the speaker's voice carries sonic import to direct readerly focus. In his work, Wordsworth directs audience attention in ways that he might have during his composition and recitation practices as illustrated through his constructed, imaginative speaking voices, which we see directing focus in "Mutability" and "The Idiot Boy." In these two formally distinct works, the striking similitude of each poem's constructed speaker is found in the authority of the poetic voice. Both the speaker in the sonnet and the poet-narrator in the narrative lyrical ballad highlight the importance of the poetic voice in mediation; however, we can contrast the imaginative speakers through a consideration of poetic authority. In "Mutability," the speaker's voice stands as the solitary sonic authority. On the contrary, in "The Idiot Boy," the poet-narrator's voice corresponds more collectively, which my analysis that follows will show, through interjections throughout the narrative and the indirect voice representations it creates within the sonic landscape of the work, as the poet-narrator weaves its authoritative voice as a character into the soundscape of others' voices and other sounds in the work.

A brief analysis of "Mutability" supports that Wordsworth likely undertook both a pedagogical and bardic role as a poet in the social sphere, particularly considering his public role as a poet in Ambleside, teaching others through his mobile composition the values he espoused orally during his rambling. Ancient Greek bardic poets were described in Homer's *Odyssey*: "And the famous bard . . . sang to them, and they sat quietly listening" (qtd. in Hirsch, *A Poet's* . . . 58). Such a poet "offers us thought schooled by intuition, emotion deeper than thought, and soulfulness deeper than emotion," and these "archaic ways of knowing go all the way down to the roots of being" (Hirsch, *A Poet's* . . . 58). While I cannot claim that my reading of Wordsworth in this sonnet can apply equally to all of Wordsworth's poems, it is likely at times that Wordsworth expressed himself through an emphatic formal tone, which delivered through a

regulated rhythm, as it is in this sonnet, produced a bardic effect on the verse and captured the essence of a poem as a portal for close attention. From my reading of this work, I find no rhythmic dislocations in the sonnet's fourteen lines, and the steady pulse of iambic pentameter is consistent throughout. The rhymes, while a variation of their Petrarchan scheme, maintain consistency from the opening line throughout the sonnet until the last line in the rhyming of "climb," "chime," "crime," "rime," "sublime," and "Time"—all masculine endings (1, 4, 5, 8, 10, 14). Such pounding consistency could, of course, have something to do with the formal sonnet structure, but I suggest that the regularity and uniformity reinforce the bardic voice of wisdom speaking within the lines to those listening who need instruction. Readers-listeners-performers of its dialectical structure realize not only its steady yet shifting views of acoustic images, vocal or tonal, "low to high" (1) and "high to low" (2), but also of visual images, themselves part of Wordsworth's visual rhythms: the melting of the "frosty rime" (8); the "whitened hill and plain" that disappears (9); "the tower sublime" that falls (10). The image of "a scale / Of awful notes, whose concord shall not fail" (2-3) forecasts early in the poem that no matter the vocal or tonal or other shifts, there are those who listen attentively and harmonize despite the attempts of distracting "casual shout[s]" (13) that break into one's field of focus. The content of "Mutability" performs a negotiation of inconstancy through consistency and vice versa, and through its speaker's authoritative voice and regular rhythm, which Wordsworth likely performed or paced off through his embodied composition process, the poem forces the audience to pay close attention.

The poem reads as though it is itself suspended in air, forcing the reader-listener-performer to sway with its currents of climbing and sinking analytical suspension through regular rhythm patterns of unstressed and stressed syllables. "Rhythm," Sacks claims, "turns



listeners into participants,” and it not only “makes listening active and motoric” but also “synchronizes the brains and minds . . . of all who participate” (244-45). In the audience’s participation of this active and motoric listening, the inviting rhythm “binds together the individual nervous systems of a human community” (Sacks 247), which would make the speaker of the poem—in this case, perhaps Wordsworth—very much like a visionary bard, who “carried necessary cultural information . . . to tell the tale of the tribe” (Hirsch, *A Poet’s* . . . 57). The motoric sense of swaying is an internal operation taking place during listening through reading, and it is enforced through the poem’s formal structure as it engages the reader-listener-performer through its sounds that the words themselves have and the sounds to which the words could refer, acoustically or psychoacoustically. The sound of the regular rhythm of the poem frames the dialectical content and harnesses not only visual and sound images but also actual audio to exemplify Wordsworth’s use of rhythm to focus attention: the rhythm “move[s] the reader from seeing visual to hearing acoustic images” and synchronizes the minds of those readers-listeners-performers (Mandell 767). These acoustic images are evident in the microcosm the poem builds through its non-deviating meter, and the effect of such a controlled and small-scale universe within the tight sonnet structure creates a confining, crowded sense of shared experience that both establishes and maintains attention.

Another way that “Wordsworth may be seen as attempting to take his works out of print and back to the aural/oral poetry symbolized by bard and ballad,” according to Laura Mandell, is through his “[i]mitating” of “the speech habits of rustics and of characters who appear in *Lyrical Ballads*” (766). We hear this imitation within “The Idiot Boy,” most notably in the voices of Betty Foy, Susan Gale, and Johnny Foy, but instead of focusing on these voices as imitative of rustic speech habits, I concentrate on the totality of the experience given to the reader in this

poem that our bard wields through his power over the narrative through its rhythmic patterns. As in “Mutability,” “The Idiot Boy” likewise performs a negotiation of inconstancy through consistency and vice versa. Its regular rhythm stands out as an important part of its dialogical quality since these patterns are produced not only through the poem’s underlying metrical structure but also through the sonic patterns we hear by listening closely to the interaction between the characters and their acoustic ecologies as they both create and experience these spaces. We move through the poem through sonic patterns both regular and irregular, at once swept through the motion of both stabilizing meter and destabilizing soundscapes complete with heteroglossia. Wordsworth reinforces the dynamic poetic experience created through the attention to sound, which imposes creative distractions on his readers-listeners-performers and encourages the relationship between the textual sonic environments and those in and beyond the text in the world of the readers-listeners-performers. His attention to the dialogic communication taking place between the textual community and the readerly community reinforces his support for such interchange.

A dialogic narrative poem of motion and attention, “The Idiot Boy,” according to Karen Guendel, is much more than a poem written through Wordsworth’s “complex appropriation of intellectual disability as an image of the poetic imagination” (66).<sup>30</sup> The work focuses on mother

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<sup>30</sup> Guendel acknowledges that this lyrical ballad “has frustrated, confused, or offended readers since its first appearance in print” (66), but she argues that Wordsworth’s use of idiocy serves not to offend but to reform attitudes about idiocy at a time when there was no neutral language to discuss what we now phrase “cognitive impairment” or “intellectual disability” (68). See Karen Guendel’s “Johnny Foy: Wordsworth’s Imaginative Hero.” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, vol. 56, no. 1, 2014, pp. 66-89. For a thorough explanation of attitudes regarding idiocy at the end of the eighteenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth century, see Joshua Gonsalves’s “Reading Idiocy: Wordsworth’s ‘The Idiot Boy.’” *The Wordsworth Circle*, vol. 38, no. 3, 2007, pp. 121-30. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/24045136](http://www.jstor.org/stable/24045136).

Betty and son Johnny Foy, “her idiot boy” (51). The speaker in the poem follows the narrative trajectory of a mother who loosens the reins on her son Johnny and compels him to take the family horse into town to fetch the doctor for a sick friend of the family. The speaker narrates the poem by exploring the peripatetic action of each character and negotiating the sounds of and within the verse as located not only in potential physical landscapes but also poeticized ones.

In “The Idiot Boy,” Wordsworth’s poet-narrator performs the embodied experience of recitation Wordsworth would have practiced during oral poetic composition, preserving the totality of experience he created in his poetry for his readers to achieve by reading-listening-performing. Upon opening the poem, in stanza one, Wordsworth’s poet-narrator introduces a scene that at once suggests three-dimensionality and implies audibility:

’Tis eight o’clock,—a clear March night,  
The moon is up—the sky is blue,  
The owlet in the moonlight air,  
He shouts from nobody knows where;  
He lengthens out his lonely shout,  
Halloo! halloo! a long halloo! (1-6)

Immediately, the poet-narrator transports the reader to the sonic landscape he perceives. This soundscape is temporal and rooted in an exact time (1). It is spatial and active with the flight of the “owlet in the moonlight air” shouting in the distance (3). The soundscape also has a dialogic quality suggestive of an announcement.

With the poet-narrator’s sounded announcement of the work’s temporality and spatiality, we can imagine what the recitation might have sounded like, hearing with our auditory imaginations simultaneously Wordsworth’s live delivery of the poet-narrator’s live delivery and visualizing the gestural aspects of such a motoric performance that would necessitate the vocalizing of “Halloo!” with each utterance (6). We can also reimagine future recitations and performances and envision what kinds of auditory environments these diverse auditory

translations might create through future representations of the various sounds at once operating on our attention.

The speaker constructs the poem's opening sestet with a demand for attention to various sounds that might seem at first to disorient the reader but ultimately function to set the scene as a narrative in regulated motion, but disorientation and regulation are always in flux in this work. The clock seems to have struck "eight," and the *k* sounds rush through line one, "o'clock,—a clear," reinforcing that time is passing (1). Simple sentence patterns follow line one and carry the even ticking rhythm through line two, and these sentences, formed from a subject and a *be* verb followed by either an adverbial or a subject complement, are separated by an emphatic pause through the use of the em dash: "The moon is up—the sky is blue" (2). The repetition of the final consonant *t* emphasizes a regularity of sound throughout the first and only sestet as well: "night" (1); "owlet" (3); "shout" (5). Finally, the initial and intermediate consonance and repetition in the last line of the first stanza collaborate to reinforce that a reader is paying close attention: "Halloo! halloo! a long halloo!" (6). This sixth line in the opening stanza dislocates, as the line's syllabic stresses no longer indicate the iambic tetrameter that dominated the first five lines but rather seems to reinforce through the exclamation marks the reading of two spondees, an iamb, and a final spondee.

We perceive this dislocation in syllabic stresses in the sixth line through the volume of the vowel sounds in the syllables (e.g., *a* and *oo* in "Halloo!" and *a* and *o* in "a long"). Recent research (November 2019) shows that "brain activity" now "suggest[s] that changes in volume" are "the key to detecting syllables" (Hamilton). In fact, researchers from the University of California, San Francisco, have recently been studying how the brain "break[s] down a stream of words into syllables," and they have discovered that we "detect . . . syllables" in the "part of the

brain called the superior temporal gyrus,” in a “process . . . critical to understanding speech” (Hamilton). Yulia Oganian and Edward F. Chang’s findings show that

The brain was using an abrupt increase in volume as a marker for each syllable. And that increase, at least in English, was occurring at the beginning of each vowel sound. . . . The brain could tell whether a vowel was stressed or unstressed. . . . [D]etecting this difference is critical because stressed and unstressed syllables help create the rhythm of human speech. The idea that the brain might use just one type of volume change to detect syllables has been debated for many years. (Hamilton)

Oganian and Chang’s research authorizes an already-existing proposal, which uses “a computer model meant to simulate the way a human brain decodes speech” and shows “detecting syllables is critical” (Hamilton). Oded Ghitza of Boston University confirms the significance of the findings: “the brain deals with the stream” of speech by segmenting the speech into its syllables, which are “the basic Lego block of language” and poetry (qtd. in Hamilton).<sup>31</sup> The dislocation, then, considered through this research is an important part of not only the poem’s form but also its sonic dialogic quality.

Just as the sixth line dislocates, we hear the first intrusive questioning of the poet-narrator. This interjection kickstarts other spontaneous interruptions that occur at various times in the poem’s soundscape and potentially replicate the digressive utterances Wordsworth might have both performed and experienced during his own recitations:

—Why bustle thus about your door,  
What means this bustle, Betty Foy?  
Why are you in this mighty fret?  
And why on horseback have you set  
Him whom you love, your idiot boy?

Beneath the moon that shines so bright,  
Till she is tired, let Betty Foy

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<sup>31</sup> See Yulia Oganian and Edward F. Chang’s “A Speech Envelope Landmark for Syllable Encoding in Human Superior Temporal Gyrus.” *Science Advances*, vol. 5, no. 11, 2019, pp. 1-13.

With girt and stirrup fiddle-faddle;  
But wherefore set upon a saddle  
Him whom she loves, her idiot boy? (7-16)

The questions serve several functions. First, they introduce the poet-narrator a little more directly beyond the initial engagement. This poet narrator, unlike the speaker in “Mutability,” is a hybrid construction in the Bakhtinian sense. Glenda Conway explains the concept of such a creation as

another level of dialogism, which fits into a category Bakhtin terms ‘hybrid constructions.’ A hybrid construction is a style of utterance Bakhtin identifies as being typical of parody. ‘[I]n parody two languages are crossed with each other, as well as two styles, two linguistic points of view, and in the final analysis two speaking subjects.’ One of these languages, Bakhtin explains, is present ‘in its own right,’ while the other is ‘present invisibly, as an actualizing background for creating and perceiving.’ What hybrid constructions create is a ‘display,’ and what readers perceive is ‘a thing in light of a particular point of view.’ (501)

Ultimately a parodic character within the soundstream of textual voices, the poet-narrator draws attention away from himself and more toward his indirect voice representations of the more notable Betty and Johnny Foy. In so doing, this poet-narrator serves as a device to develop the text as a complex system at work negotiating perceptual difference through a sonic unfolding of auditory cues.

Second, the questions introduce and engage characters beyond the poet-narrator because the questions are directed to Betty Foy specifically with regard to her “idiot boy” (11). They draw forth points of the plot through tone in suggesting the poet-narrator’s problematic understanding of not only the boy’s capabilities but also Betty’s parenting in allowing the boy “on horseback” (10). These accumulating questions also situate the poet-narrator as uncertain and possibly improvisational and reaching for narrative content, an occasion that in an alphabetic text might prompt imaginative responses from a reader but in a live delivery might welcome extemporaneous responses from an audience spoken aloud for the reciter to hear and henceforth incorporate.

The improvisational nature of the narration happens more directly later in the text and carries the narrative for just short of fifty lines:

Oh reader! now that I might tell  
What Johnny and his horse are doing!  
What they've been doing all this time,  
Oh could I put it into rhyme,  
A most delightful tale pursuing!

.....

Perhaps he's turned himself about,  
His face unto his horse's tail,  
And still and mute, in wonder lost,  
All like a silent horseman ghost,  
He travels on along the vale.

.....

Perhaps, with head and heels on fire,  
And like the very soul of evil,  
He's galloping away, away,  
And so he'll gallop on for aye,  
The bane of all that dread the devil.

I to the muses have been bound  
These fourteen years, by strong indentures;  
Oh gentle muses! let me tell  
But half of what to him befel,  
For sure he met with strange adventures.

Oh gentle muses! is this kind?  
Why will ye thus my suit repel?  
Why of your further aid bereave me?  
And can ye thus unfriended leave me?  
Ye muses! whom I love so well.

.....

Unto his horse, that's feeding free,  
He seems, I think, the rein to give . . . (322-63)

From this excerpt, with not only the poet-narrator's direct address to the "reader" (322) and his impassioned apostrophe, twice repeated, to the "gentle muses" (349, 352) and later "Ye muses"

(356) but also his repeated use of “Perhaps” (327, 332, 337, 342), we can hear Wordsworth’s use of tautology for revealing his poet-narrator’s inadequacies and the insufficiencies of language, as he explained it in his “Note to *The Thorn* (1800)”:

now every man must know that an attempt is rarely made to communicate impassioned feelings without something of an accompanying consciousness of the inadequateness of our own powers, or the deficiencies of language. During such efforts there will be a craving in the mind, and as long as it is unsatisfied the Speaker will cling to the same words, or words of the same character. There are also various other reasons why repetition and apparent tautology are frequently beauties of the highest kind. Among the chief of these reasons is the interest which the mind attaches to words, not only as symbols of the passion, but as *things*, active and efficient, which are of themselves part of the passion. And further, from a spirit of fondness, exultation, and gratitude, the mind luxuriates in the repetition of words which appear successfully to communicate its feelings. (594; emphasis original)

Wordsworth’s poet-narrator’s state in these lines exemplifies how “the mind luxuriates in the repetition” (594), which moves the narrative forward, generates readerly interest, and drives the readers’ bodies and minds. The section with its phrasing, such as that in line 363 with “He seems, I think,” also echoes the sense of uncertainty and anxiety expressed by Betty Foy through her frantic suggestions for what might be happening to Johnny while he is out of her sight.

The lines communicate that Betty Foy’s thoughts themselves are pressure disturbances, which create in both her and the listening audience the sense of anxiety: she is “not so well” (148). She begins to listen to her psychophysical soundscape, “And to the road she turns her ears, / And thence full many a sound she hears” (149-50), perceiving “an endless string” (170) of “vile reflections” (168) as possibilities for Johnny’s absence while simultaneously attending to the sounds of her physical environment. Betty Foy keeps some thoughts to herself, “Which she to Susan will not tell” (151), but the poet-narrator populates the narrative with her voice and other sounds for the listening audience to feel the emotion these psychophysical sounds create:

Poor Susan moans, poor Susan groans,



‘As sure as there’s a moon in heaven,’  
Cries Betty, ‘he’ll be back again;  
They’ll both be here, ’tis almost ten,  
They’ll both be here before eleven.’

Poor Susan moans, poor Susan groans,  
The clock gives warning for eleven;  
’Tis on the stroke—‘If Johnny’s near,’  
Quoth Betty ‘he will soon be here,  
As sure as there’s a moon in heaven.’

The clock is on the stroke of twelve,  
And Johnny is not yet in sight,  
The moon’s in heaven, as Betty sees,  
But Betty is not quite at ease;  
And Susan has a dreadful night.

.....

And Betty’s drooping at the heart.  
That happy time all past and gone,  
‘How can it be he is so late?  
The Doctor he has made him wait,  
Susan! they’ll both be here anon.’

And Susan’s growing worse and worse,  
And Betty’s in a sad quandary;  
And then there’s nobody to say  
If she must go or she must stay:  
—She’s in a sad quandary.

The clock is on the stroke of one . . . (152-82)

The tautology in the excerpt here communicates some narrative intrusion with the poet-narrator’s repeating of Betty Foy’s position “in a sad quandary” (178, 181), but beyond that, it more importantly imparts the severity of Betty Foy’s passion, shown through her repeating of “They’ll both be here” (155, 156, 176). In fact, the section illustrates how the language falls short in representing any sense of clarity that one might establish within moments of such hysteria, and Betty vocalizes her lack of clarity by talking to herself, repeating “As sure as there’s a moon in heaven” (153, 161). The repetition of the word “heaven” (153, 161, 164) builds tension in the

moment through its rhyming with “eleven” (156, 158); Betty Foy’s repetition here serves to build the association between time and death and further the anxiety that she feels during this moment of concern that her son’s long absence will certainly be permanent. This repetition also functions sonically as her own personal moan and groan, which Wordsworth has constructed through his use of word sounds and the punctuation at the lines’ ends in this section of the poem with “groans,” (152), “heaven,” (153), “again;” (154), “ten,” (155), “eleven.” (156), “groans,” (157), and “eleven;” (158); each word ending the lines acoustically sounds the nasal consonant *n* sound, and each comma, semicolon, and period prolongs the sense of the line, with the end-stopped line 156 ending the stanza and resuming the process all over again to showcase the renewal of not only the sounds but also the sentiments expressed. Betty Foy’s moans and groans both amplify and compete with the poet-narrator’s reminder that all the while “Poor Susan moans, poor Susan groans” (152, 157). Betty is unable to communicate rational explanations for Johnny’s prolonged absence, and the tautology helps Wordsworth express that. Betty Foy hears her own voice talking aloud to Susan. She hears Susan’s moans and groans. She hears Susan’s voice speak to her. She hears the warnings of the clock, which the poet-narrator reifies as palpable by repeating “clock” (158, 162, 182) and “on the stroke” (159, 162, 182). These are sounds produced within Betty Foy’s physical soundscape, but she also hears beyond the physical into her psychophysical soundscape. She imagines sounds, which we are not privy to, and considers events and possibilities that function as inner pressure disturbances or fictive vibratory motion, such as possible circumstances that could have kept Johnny away longer—waiting on the doctor, drowning, losing his way—and the uncertainty of the situation only fuels the anxiety.

The many auditory cues highlight the poet-narrator and characters’ engagement within the sonic environment of the work as diverse in nature though equally important intrinsically to

the work because they too initiate the sonic possibilities both within and beyond the text, with each calling attention to the sonic differences each one perpetuates. From the outset, we hear the differences in the ways their worlds are initially sonically informed, ourselves perceiving the extempore questioning of the poet-narrator, the tangible noise of Betty's "bustle" (7, 8) and "fret" (9), and the initial burring but eventual silence of Johnny entraining to the rhythm while horseback riding. Through the poet-narrator's persona and these characters, Wordsworth imparts variations of the sonic landscape of the poem to our ears, so that we may take in the spatial and acoustic data of Betty and Johnny and experience the mutability of our own natures through the media provided by the sounds of this one poetic world. Wordsworth poeticizes perceptual difference through his attention to characterization and negotiates this difference through the work's rhythmic regularities, soundscape variations, and ambiguous displays of perception to show the tangible impact of the soundstream as not only physical but psychophysical sound.

How the poem is perceived affects how the brain processes it, and in "The Idiot Boy," we see acts of perception from both Betty and Johnny Foy that illustrate this point. First, we perceive, then we process, as per John J. Ratey, and perceptual systems are important, as the processing of what is perceived cannot occur without perception. The brain changes according to "environmental stimulation," and our perceptual systems are how we receive information from the world, with "attention and consciousness" being "the foundations" for how "we create an understanding of the world"; "they are the basic functions that give rise to the mind" (Ratey). Ratey claims that it is important not to overlook the possibility of "perceptual difference" and that evaluating difference in perception provides important information about what the brain might need to "relearn" the world. Revealing as it does others' perceptual differences, which Wordsworth contrasts through strategizing attention and distraction, this lyrical ballad seeks to

help interlocutors relearn the world and shape how one understands others' perceptions in more positive directions, with particular concern in this work toward the reimagining of notions of idiocy in his time. Wordsworth's own perceptual difference as poeticized through "The Idiot Boy" might affect perceiving, attending, and consciousnesses and empower this renewal of understanding through his creation of indirect voice representations, products of his imagination, which in turn illustrate a totality of experience through their suspense-filled narrative soundscapes in tandem with the motion of the work's rhythmic regularity.

Wordsworth's poem allows for this full experience in several ways, which we can consider through meter if we look closely at the rhythmic patterns located within these 463 lines of mostly iambic tetrameter verse, "used in ancient Greek dramatic dialogue," but there are a few variations (Baldick). Wordsworth establishes a common formal rhythm pattern to entrain his interlocutors, but scanning for the regularity of these rhythmic patterns reveals several variances seemingly intentional: the poem on occasion contains shorter than expected verse lines, syllables that are extrametrical and at times lack syllabic consistency, and places where accentual meter seems to disrupt the syllabic authority, especially in places where a word might end in "y" and have "a" follow it (e.g., "many a"). These inconsistencies in rhythmic patterns are scattered consistently through the poem, and they show up in relation to the content of the poem, performing important work for both the narrative and poet-narrator and seeking the attention of the audience. The rhythmic regularities, ambiguities, and fragmentation Wordsworth puts into practice in this poem direct and redirect the reader's attention, intentionally creating moments of focus and distraction.

Betty Foy's soundscape is one that develops a sense of distraction that involves community and the intense panic she feels. From Betty Foy's perspective, the regulated, even

rhythms justify her worry as the appropriate behavior of a mother in search of her missing child. She is frantic, and we pay close attention to that frenetic display of her energy because we are so entrained by the narration carried forth through Wordsworth's regular meter. An interlocutor or reader-listener-performer might display the same kind of frantic behavior during recitation, listening intently for the next part of the narration to reveal something important about Johnny's whereabouts. Nevertheless, interlocutors need not rush the end of the recitation, and readers-listeners-performers need not rush ahead to reach the end of the text. The energy of the rhythm and the rhythms of the sonic environments and acoustic ecologies beyond the meter created within and beyond the text through the context, narration, and tautology, instead, carries communication forward, driving readers-listeners-performers through the work.

Wordsworth modulates attention to accommodate distraction, and we attend steadily and at once to these dueling sonic environments. He showcases the relationship between attention and distraction so heavily at work to mimic how the ways we might perceive affect our focus and how we experience the world. Wordsworth certainly recognized that there were readers who were on one hand quite able to pay close attention and readers on the other hand who were unable to focus. Regular rhythm patterns might entrain some and distract others, so attentional and distracting impulses would have been at the forefront of his own thinking about poetry. "The Idiot Boy" makes clear that disorientation and regulation are always in flux, but these fluctuations as they exist sonically demand and thus produce rewarding interpretive moments.

Perhaps, Wordsworth reimagined notions of idiocy as refined sensibility and anticipated an inclusive interpretive community for his poetry. Johnny Foy as the "idiot boy" (51) himself is cause for consideration of such a reimagination. His characteristics illustrate him as more refined than his worrisome mother, though she clearly seems more connected to the community as

shown through her relationship with and commitment to her friend Susan Gale as well as her reliance on the doctor. The community as represented by the doctor appears to shun Johnny Foy, as the poem reveals through Betty Foy's interaction with him as she searches for her son:

Poor Betty! in this sad distemper,  
The doctor's self would hardly spare,  
Unworthy things she talked and wild,  
Even he, of cattle the most mild,  
The pony had his share.

And now she's got into the town,  
And to the doctor's door she hies;  
'Tis silence all on every side;  
The town so long, the town so wide,  
Is silent as the skies.

And now she's at the doctor's door,  
She lifts the knocker, rap, rap, rap,  
The doctor at the casement shews,  
His glimmering eyes that peep and doze;  
And one hand rubs his old night-cap.

'Oh Doctor! Doctor! where's my Johnny?'  
'I'm here, what is't you want with me?'  
'Oh Sir! you know I'm Betty Foy,  
And I have lost my poor dear boy,  
You know him—him you often see;'

'He's not so wise as some folks be,'  
'The devil take his wisdom!' said  
The Doctor, looking somewhat grim,  
'What, woman! should I know of him?'  
And, grumbling, he went back to bed. (247-71)

The doctor's disinterest in helping Betty Foy, perhaps caused by Betty herself, could stem from her disturbance of his sleep with her "rap, rap, rap" (258); however, it could also be caused by the doctor's seeming familiarity, shown in this excerpt through the repetition of "you know" (264, 266), with Johnny Foy and his perception of Johnny as a local "idiot," who would have been communally perceived as lacking wisdom.

The doctor's bias and his abrupt refusal to help Betty Foy find her son only magnifies the value Wordsworth places on Johnny as a character. In responding to a letter from John Wilson in June of 1802, Wordsworth defended "The Idiot Boy" and "Idiots" more generally:

I can only say that the loathing and disgust which many people have at the sight of an Idiot, is a feeling which, though having som[e] foundation in human nature is not necessarily attached to it in any vi[rtuous?] degree, but is owing, in a great measure to a false delicacy, and, if I [may] say it without rudeness, a certain want of comprehensiveness of think[ing] and feeling. ("Letter to John Wilson (7 June 1802)" 623)

Wordsworth concludes his letter by reassuring John Wilson that his character "is not one of those who cannot articulate" ("Letter to John Wilson (7 June 1802)" 624). He makes it clear in this letter that expression is something he values, and he shows that Johnny Foy can and does express himself. Wordsworth establishes a sense of value in the isolation and of Johnny from his mother while he broadens his horizons quite literally in nature. Notwithstanding the dialogisms he undoubtedly carries with him from having almost certainly heard them on several occasions—"what to follow, what to shun, / What do, and what to leave undone, / How turn to left, and how to right" (63-66)—Johnny Foy experiences a sense of freedom he had not felt before. This independent journey of intellectual contemplation foregrounds his ability to express himself apart from the head and hand motions and private language he seems to share only with his mother:

And Betty o'er and o'er has told  
The boy who is her best delight,  
Both what to follow, what to shun,  
What do, and what to leave undone,  
How turn to left, and how to right.

And Betty's most especial charge,  
Was, 'Johnny! Johnny! mind that you  
Come home again, nor stop at all,

Come home again, whate'er befall,  
My Johnny do, I pray you do.'

To this did Johnny answer make,  
Both with his head, and with his hand,  
And proudly shook the bridle too,  
And then! his words were not a few,  
Which Betty well could understand. (62-76)

Johnny's mobility allows him to move away from his mother's noise and move beyond his community and their lack of respect for him into a private encounter with nature—beyond the riding on horseback and his listening to the “cocks” (460). Johnny's need to roam and appreciate the silence and psychophysical sounds of his private psychoacoustic situation is logical, especially as he certainly tolerates Betty Foy's panic-stricken worry more so in the world of the poem than we have to in our reading of it. Not that Wordsworth would not have also valued Betty Foy's maternal love for Johnny; Quite the contrary, as Wordsworth in the “Letter to John Wilson (7 June 1802)” makes clear: “I have indeed often looked upon the conduct of fathers and mothers of the lower classes of society towards Idiots as the great triumph of the human heart” (623). Johnny in his solitude seems as composed and sustained as Wordsworth during the delivery of a sonnet like “Mutability,” as previously mentioned, and certainly Wordsworth valued this aspect of his character, as much as he valued the boy in “There was a Boy”:

The Boy, there introduced, is listening, with something of a feverish and restless anxiety, for the recurrence of the riotous sounds which he had previously excited; and, at the moment when the intensesness of his mind is beginning to remit, he is surprised into a perception of the solemn and tranquilizing images which the Poem describes. (“Preface to *Poems* (1815)” 635)

Johnny Foy learns to value what might seem of obvious worth to readers: listening to meaningful silence and psychophysical sounds:

But when the pony moved his legs,  
Oh! then for the poor idiot boy!  
For joy he cannot hold the bridle,



For joy his head and heels are idle,  
He's idle all for very joy.

And while the pony moves his legs,  
In Johnny's left hand you may see,  
The green bough's motionless and dead:  
The moon that shines above his head  
Is not more still and mute than he.

His heart it was so full of glee,  
That till full fifty yards were gone,  
He quite forgot his holly whip,  
And all his skill in horsemanship,  
Oh! happy, happy, happy John.

And Betty's standing at the door,  
And Betty's face with joy o'erflows,  
Proud of herself, and proud of him,  
She sees him in his travelling trim;  
How quietly her Johnny goes.

The silence of her idiot boy,  
What hopes it sends to Betty's heart!  
He's at the guide-post—he turns right,  
She watches till he's out of sight,  
And Betty will not then depart. (82-106)

Here, silence seems to represent a moment of Johnny's precategoryal perception, which I find poeticized through Wordsworth's use of "joy" in the above excerpt. The term serves to represent the perception of precategoryal sensory information in that the thought in the moment seems realized but only as unsymbolized inner experience. Unsymbolized thought is "the experience of an explicit, differentiated thought that does not include the experience of words, images, or any other symbols" (Hurlburt and Akhter 1365). Hurlburt and Akhter write that "unsymbolized thinking is the only or main feature of inner experience" and "part of a more complex inner experience that may include other simultaneous instances of unsymbolized thinking: inner speech, inner seeing, feelings, and other kinds of experience" (1366). That Wordsworth's poet-narrator pairs this unsymbolized thinking with joy does not mean that Johnny's inner experience

of the word as precategoryal was what the poet-narrator perceives as joy categorially; it could have been subliminally perceived as other elements of the joy peculiar only to Johnny Foy. Johnny's "joy" is sublime, and he finds it through his encounter with the horse as it begins to move. Stimulated by the motion of the animal, Johnny Foy participates in what is described as an "idle" (85, 86) moment of awe, textually deemed "idle" or ineffective by the representation granted to Johnny by the parodic poet-narrator perhaps to accentuate the inaccessibility of such a moment before. It is plausible that Johnny had never been previously provided with the freedom to confront such a moment, and thus the current experience has no precedent and consequently has yet to be symbolized. Nevertheless, Wordsworth also extends Johnny's private sense of "joy" to his mother, representing again a moment of precategoryal perception, but this happens only when she finally sees Johnny again:

She looks again—her arms are up—  
She screams—*she cannot move for joy*;  
She darts as with a torrent's force,  
She almost has o'turned the horse,  
And fast she holds her idiot boy.

And Johnny burrs, and laughs aloud,  
Whether in cunning or in joy,  
I cannot tell; but while he laughs,  
Betty a drunken pleasure quaffs,  
To hear again her idiot boy. (382-91; emphasis added)

Once Betty Foy shares in Johnny's "joy" (383), representative again of precategoryal perception, Johnny reciprocates by speaking in language they each understand a little better, as he "burrs, and laughs aloud" (387). The burring noise he makes with his lips is another way he has communicated with Betty in the past. Again, it is part of their private shared language, but it is also now a language he communicates more publicly, sharing it as he does with nature, embedding it into the sonic landscape along with the owlets' "hoot[s]" and "purr[s]" (114):

Burr, burr—now Johnny’s lips they burr,  
As loud as any mill, or near it,  
Meek as a lamb the pony moves,  
And Johnny makes the noise he loves,  
And Betty listens, glad to hear it.

Away she hies to Susan Gale:  
And Johnny’s in a merry tune,  
The owlets hoot, the owlets purr,  
And Johnny’s lips they burr, burr, burr,  
And on he goes beneath the moon.

His steed and he right well agree,  
For of this pony there’s a rumour,  
That should he lose his eyes and ears,  
And should he live a thousand years,  
He never will be out of humour.

But then he is a horse that thinks! (107-22)

This passage reveals that while Johnny shares a language with his mother and communicates in nature, he also bears a strong resemblance to his horse in that they both “think” even if “when he thinks his pace is slack” (122-23). The *OED*’s definition of “slack” (def. 5c), as used by Coleridge in *Biographia Literaria* (1817) (“The wind continuing slack”), communicates the sense “Of wind, or tide: Blowing, or running, with very little strength or speed” (“slack, adj.”). Like his horse, Johnny’s thinking results in a slowing of the speed of his pace, but in using this definition of “slack” (123), Wordsworth retains the meaning that the faculties are indeed in motion. Johnny Foy, like his horse, perceives beyond sight and hearing and engages in the apprehension of mental phenomena and would do so “should he lose his eyes and ears” (119); he does so slowly, perhaps intently, in order that he might attend more comprehensively. We know that

. . . Johnny all night long had heard  
The owls in tuneful concert strive;  
No doubt too he the moon had seen;  
For in the moonlight he had been

From eight o'clock till five. (452-56)

Johnny's slow, intentional attending, "From eight o'clock till five" (456), would be antithetical to his mother's own frenzied perceptual processing. In explaining the relationship between the pony and the boy, Wordsworth assigns a remarkable, almost eternal, intellectual patience to both the animal and the boy not to undermine the boy's intellectual capacity but to authorize his ability as naturally endowed like that of the horse.

Wordsworth gives Johnny Foy's voice the authority in the last stanza, where the pressure of the reading falls on Johnny finally having a chance to speak and be heard above the "owls" (442, 444, 445, 446, 453), the sounds of which wed the reciting poet-narrator's soundscape to the sonic environment of the "four travellers" (443), thus uniting these figurative soundscapes with those literal ones of the interlocutors in the poet-narrator's company. "The owl[s] in the moonlight air" (3) have been "shout[ing] from nobody knows where" (4) from the beginning of the narrative. They made their way into the middle of the poem "hoot[ing]" and "purr[ing]" (114) along with Johnny's "burr[ing], burr[ing], burr[ing]" (115). In the last few lines, they again are heard through Johnny's voice as they have been perceived by him during his slow, intentional attending:

The owls have hardly sung their last,  
While our four travellers homeward wend;  
The owls have hooted all night long,  
And with the owls began my song,  
And with the owls must end.

For while they all were travelling home,  
Cried Betty, 'Tell us Johnny, do,  
Where all this long night you have been,  
What you have heard, what you have seen,  
And Johnny, mind you tell us true.'

.....

And thus to Betty's question, he,  
Made answer, like a traveller bold,  
(His very words I give to you,)  
'The cocks did crow to-who, to-who,  
And the sun did shine so cold.' (442-61)

In these closing stanzas, we finally hear Johnny and comprehend the complexity of his seemingly simplistic acts of perception, evidenced through the listening, attending, distraction, and feelings apparent in his long-awaited answering of his mother's question about his whereabouts, what he had heard, and what he had seen on his journey away from home: "'The cocks did crow to-who, to-who, / And the sun did shine so cold'" (460-61). Johnny withholds and does not impart to us the full complexity of his experience, but we immediately sense that he has been "listening, with something of a feverish and restless anxiety, for the recurrence of the riotous sounds [the "owls" (442)/the "cocks" (460)] . . . and, at the moment when the intensesness of his mind is beginning to remit, he is surprised into a perception of the solemn and tranquilizing images which the Poem describes," images we have been aware of through the narration but that Johnny Foy only presently articulates he has perceived (Wordsworth, "Preface to *Poems* (1815)" 635). That Johnny has perceived "cocks" (460) instead of "owls" (442) is consequential, however. By *OED* definition, cocks (def. A.n<sup>1</sup>.II.7b) refer to the "male of various other birds" ("cock, n.1 and int."), and Johnny's use of the word here in contrast to the poet-narrator's own word signifies his perceptual difference. The textual difference reifies that the perceptual experience belongs to him. It also shows directional possibilities for his attention, as he returns homeward toward the sounds from whence he began. We realize in this moment that he has been impacted not by Betty Foy's worry and the noise of community activity but by the silent act of contemplation and solitude within the natural soundscape. Johnny's natural soundscape produces a figurative personal resonance of its own within its literal sonic

environment that unites the two acoustic ecologies. These layered soundscapes, blended from the acoustics of literal and figurative—physical and psychophysical sounds—both distract and drive interlocutors to attend in ways arguably more profound than the desperate noise of worry Betty Foy’s own experiences make audible.

Wordsworth’s engagement in this poem with motion and attention allows readers-listeners-performers to hear how rhythms are layered into the poem to represent not only the poetic impulse in poetic composition but also recitations at the level of performance and audience engagement. These layers are dialogic and creative in nature, and they quite possibly happened as the result of Wordsworth’s own engagement with actual sonic environments in the composition of figurative, imaginative ones, whether he was composing while walking in public or private spaces or extemporaneously composing during recitation in moments responding to interlocutors’ comments, suggestions, or questions. The rhythms created in the exchanges between regulated metric sound patterns, bodily rhythms, dialogisms, interjected commentary from audiences, created or actual sonic environments, and or created or reimagined rhythms from readers-listeners-performers are not stable but are rather inconsistent and should be closely considered. Through these unpredictable rhythms, Wordsworth might have been working to create alternating bursts of attention to develop creative practices that allow for a totality of experience during an aesthetic event that would be always renewable if an understanding of sound and live delivery were taken into account.

Phillips’s focus on eighteenth-century narratives of distraction offers a way of thinking about Wordsworth’s inconsistent rhythms during his delivery. She writes that “rhythm perception” is “connected to attention studies”:

This research explores how environmental rhythms structure attention and how temporal patterns shape cognitive processes, including working memory, and

facilitate our ability to construct meaning. To understand how rhythm helps us coordinate information in time in distraction-rife environments, researchers often introduce irregular rhythms to probe the limits and the nature of cognitive capacity. As Lashley noted . . . , ‘rhythms tend to spread to almost every other concurrent activity. One falls into step with a band, tends to breathe, and even to speak in time with the rhythm. The all pervasiveness of the rhythmic discharge is shown by the great difficulty of learning to maintain two rhythms at once . . . ’ Disrupting this system . . . affects far more than our processing of complex auditory rhythms; it can distort basic speech processing, scattering attention until we can no longer comprehend words. . . . Yet this framing of scattered attention as pathology is matched by a strain of research interested in *distraction’s role in creativity*. According to Allan Snyder, for example, *scattered focus brings in a wider range of ideas for processing, increasing our facility in synthesizing seemingly disparate concepts. Modulating attention to accommodate distraction may in fact promote cognitive fluency and increase creativity*. (Phillips 129-30; emphasis added)

For Wordsworth, I suggest that a disruption of regular rhythm would have facilitated the motion of peripatetic poetic composition and could have been quite generative, the same kind of motion that the journey on horseback would have provided for Johnny during his moment of attending that led to his final articulation of language.

If we consider Susan Gale and her sickness as a disruption of the regular rhythms of Betty and Johnny Foy’s lives, then we might also understand her recovery as unifying in its reinstatement of those regular rhythms. After all, she shows up again once Betty reunites with Johnny and his horse:

And who is she, be-times abroad,  
That hobbles up the steep rough road?  
Who is it, but old Susan Gale? (419-21)

Susan Gale’s reintroduction to the narrative here is significant because her presence mediates the experiences of both Betty and Johnny Foy. Susan has an agency both Johnny and Betty lack to steady herself and the physical and psychophysical sounds of her acoustic ecology through her oral communication and peripatetic action, reasonably deliberating through fears and regulating anxieties through pacing, as “Away she posts up hill and down” (437):

She turned, she tossed herself in bed,

On all sides doubts and terrors met her;  
Point after point did she discuss;  
And while her mind was fighting thus,  
Her body still grew better.

‘Alas! what is become of them?  
These fears can never be endured,  
I’ll to the wood.’—The word scarce said,  
Did Susan rise up from her bed,  
As if by magic cured. (427-36)

This excerpt focuses on Susan Gale’s ability to rationalize and redirect her own attention as when “On all sides doubts and terrors met her” (428), “Point after point did she discuss” (429). Susan Gale successfully self-censors her hysteria, an active, creative ability Betty Foy lacked, and then she sets out toward her own solitary journey to find her friends in nature. At once, she represents the unifying of the opposing positions of both Johnny and Betty Foy. The multifocality Wordsworth presents through the work intersects at this point, and all sonic variances up until this point converge—to indeed harmonize—as though the plot itself reveals an underlying acoustic structure regulated only through the peripatetic motion of Johnny Foy’s horse’s galloping steps, Betty Foy’s corybantic pursuing of her absent son, and Susan Gale’s hobbling to locate the members of her community that she values who we know also value her. These walks bring the community together.

Regular and irregular patterns of walking to compose a regulated poetic rhythm would allow Wordsworth to manage intervals of attention and inattention when the regularity of the verse was not yet stabilized. American poet and critic Edward Hirsch writes that “[a] walk is a way of entering the body, and also of leaving it,” adding that during walking, he is “both here and there, betwixt and between, strolling along, observing things, thinking of something else, . . . mov[ing] in a liminal space” (“‘My Pace Provokes My Thoughts’: Poetry and Walking” 5).



Walking, for Hirsch, “quickens . . . thoughts, inducing a flow of ideas” (“‘My Pace Provokes My Thoughts’: Poetry and Walking” 5). These points are obvious once considered, but they are undervalued and underestimated for Wordsworth because they were so much a part of his everyday life. Hirsch realizes the importance of the act for not only himself as a poet but also for Wordsworth; he acknowledges that “Wordsworth’s favored method of composition was to walk back and forth in his garden murmuring to himself in a sing-song voice, ‘booming and hawing’ in five-beat lines, creating and memorizing his poems, which he later dictated at home” (“‘My Pace Provokes My Thoughts’: Poetry and Walking” 7). Hirsch further describes Wordsworth’s process through the words of the quondam gardener’s boy as he “described him on the grass walk at Rydal Mount”: “‘He would set his head a bit forrad and put his hands behint his back, and then he would start a bumming, and it was bum, bum, bum, stop; then bum, bum, bum reet down till t’other end, then he’d set down & git a bit o’ paper and write a bit’” (qtd. in Hirsch, “‘My Pace Provokes My Thoughts’: Poetry and Walking” 7). The details here are like other accounts about his walking and composing, but the specific accounts of meter here cannot be trusted. The rhythms of Wordsworth’s pacing, together with his sequencing of ideas and oral expression, make up complex auditory rhythms in themselves that certainly were not always stable or immediately in harmony.

Yet, I imagine that in walking through these moments of physical irregularity full of half-realized intellectual and poetic designs, he could comprehend a sense of momentum guiding him toward regularity. This motion in particular would allow him to process that “wider range of ideas” and synthesize “seemingly disparate concepts” he might not have otherwise been able to bring together (Phillips 130).

This method of idea generation is achieved through the physiological, physical, and psychological realities of walking, reciting, and composing. These realities are consistent with Elfenbein's notion of "percussive Romanticism, in which a pounding regularity of meter does the work of voice," although they are created within actual local contexts in lieu of the confines of print (195). In such moments, we can conceptualize how Wordsworth, during his open-air composition and recitation, might have remembered, engaged, performed, and held audience attention using modern-day cognitive science and psychophysics. Modern-day cognitive science and psychophysics provide insight about Wordsworth's live delivery, and this understanding, along with the consideration of doctrines from elocutionary science, in particular the possible exchanges between Wordsworth and Thelwall, reinforce my claims about not only hearing, acoustics, and psychoacoustics but also attention and distraction.

Since Wordsworth and Thelwall were in conversation, it is highly likely that the two would have exchanged ideas and philosophies about elocution and poetry that would both blur the divisions between their two seemingly disparate spheres of influence and bind them more closely together professionally. Judith Thompson makes exploratory connections between the two as she examines the intertwining of "their theory and reception as well as their structure, genre, and genesis" of both *Lyrical Ballads* and *Poems, Chiefly Written in Retirement* (161). However, her aim to illustrate Thelwall's silenced position within the Wordsworthian circle overshadows some of their shared understanding regarding poetry. She places Thelwall in a more radical and democratic light than Wordsworth, and in this attempt, she both states the obvious and reveals a seeming lack of interest in Wordsworth's own ability to both radicalize and democratize. It is clear that she takes a position to represent Thelwall over Wordsworth, and her position seems defensive and overstated.

Even so, the crumbs Thompson leaves behind in her work regarding their exchanges are clarified by my own reading of Wordsworth's peripatetic composing process through some of Thelwall's statements, which have no doubt colored my own interpretation of Wordsworth's poetic project. According to Denyse Rockey, Thelwall's interest "was not only in philology and articulatory phonetics"; he was concerned with the body itself as "governed by principles, those of the voice being reflected in the musical aspect of speech, prosody, which was most perfectly expressed in poetry"; authentic "harmony was the result of concordance between the natural rhythms of the orovocal musculature and the inherent rhythms, or cadential patterns of the language" (165).<sup>32</sup> The facets of elocution at work within Wordsworth's own poetic system, as I envision and understand it, reveal that these two men shared common ground regarding the production of poetry even when these commonalities seem opaque. Thompson mentions their connections by highlighting Thelwall's views of poetry in relation to *Lyrical Ballads*, citing Wordsworth's ideas about the "'primary laws of . . . Nature'" in reference to the "'beautiful and permanent objects with which the passions of men are incorporated' through repeated experience and regular feelings, from which the 'best part of language derives'" (qtd. in Thompson 177). She links Wordsworth here to Thelwall's "primary law" of "stalwart materialis[m]," which Thelwall defines as follows:

'Tone and look and gesture . . . are essential parts of the original language of Nature; and, perhaps, have been exhibited in their highest perfection in ages and nations . . . little removed from original simplicity . . . And still does the voice of Nature cry within us, to give latitude to this artless language . . . [U]niversal Nature, in its most tremendous, and its most delightful workings, . . . proceed[s] by general sympathies . . . language alone is not sufficient; nature's epitome, like nature's self, must sympathize through every element; motion and look and

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<sup>32</sup> For more on Thelwall's life, lectures, elocutionary movement, and therapeutic system, see Denyse Rockey's "John Thelwall and the Origins of British Speech Therapy." *Medical History*, vol. 23, no. 2, 1979, pp. 156-75.

attitude must manifest the inspiration of genuine feeling.’ (qtd. in Thompson 177-78)

In Thompson’s sculpted passage from a longer excerpt of *The Vestibule of Eloquence* (1810), we can see that Thelwall seems to put Wordsworth’s poetic practice into his system, revising the subject in a material existence and relocating Wordsworth’s “selection of language really used by men,” which here becomes utterances of tone and look and gesture—becomes voices—and *these human voices* of “[l]ow and rustic life” cry out as part of Universal Nature through the poet’s utterances, which are embodied and manifested beyond print (“Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*” 596-97). An understanding of dialogism clarifies the connections I make between Wordsworth and Thelwall, as I link the poet and elocutionist in terms of utterance, of voice. According to Volker Schürmann, “utterance is ‘internally’ social or dialogical,” and because such utterances exist “only as answers to someone else,” one self located in the utterance “has the necessity to build up a relation to the other” (115). What this means in connection to Wordsworth’s poetic project is that the foundational abstractions of his philosophy relocate into physical, more subjective realms where they may be more useful, obvious, and active—beyond, yet, through the poet to both individual and community.

Concretizing the poet’s role in this way also has implications for the type of audience Wordsworth might have imagined. Whether the poet’s role according to Wordsworth was to teach the lowly to assemble and move across their community terrain, to listen clearly to truth, to distract themselves from irrelevant cacophony, or to cry out in their own voices through silent reflection or embodied speech sounds, Wordsworth conceived readers with traits we might align with characters in “The Idiot Boy” and even “Lucy Gray.” While these traits might be linked to Romantic notions of idiocy, I suggest that Wordsworth reimagined notions of idiocy as refined sensibility and anticipated an inclusive community for his poetry.

Overall, the local context of Wordsworth's poetic composition and recitation offers a way into rethinking Wordsworth's revisionary capacity. His public persona—that of a poet composing aloud and wandering through his terraces and local community murmuring in his dialect—"pacing to and fro"—directs itself and others beyond selfish considerations of overblown individualism and beyond a poet's wish to reinvent or reimagine himself for the sake of leaving behind a conservative legacy. This figure drives others toward a collective social consciousness concerned with the developmental progress of communities not only local but also within a broader political landscape. In the next chapter, I will examine Wordsworth's voice on these terms through an analysis of *The Prelude* of 1805.

## CHAPTER 3

### WORDSWORTH'S "CIRCUMAMBIENT WORLD": SOUND SIGNALS OF DISTRACTION AND PHILOSOPHIC SONG

Probably sometime in 1805, Wordsworth wrote a letter to Sir George Beaumont to inquire about his health; Beaumont had been ill, and Wordsworth was concerned because he had not received any updates by way of letter regarding his friend's recovery ("Wordsworth to Sir George Beaumont . . ." 119).<sup>33</sup> In the letter, Wordsworth writes, "*if I but hear* from time to time how you are going on in health, or upon any occasion when my sympathies can give you comfort or pleasure, *this is all I look for*" ("Wordsworth to Sir George Beaumont . . ." 119; emphasis added). The letter stands out to me because of how, in this one sentence, Wordsworth expresses his pressing need to both hear and see—and in that sequence. In order to hear something of his friend's health, he looks. The importance of receiving a letter, which Wordsworth downplays to ease his friend's mind in his letter, rests not in the seeing of it but in his hearing of the message it includes:

Should such an impulse of genial spirits as one sometimes feels at the thought of taking a walk, making a sketch, or playing a tune ever prompt you to take up the pen, *let me hear* from you, but not otherwise; never trouble your head about it a moment. ("Wordsworth to Sir George Beaumont . . ." 119-20; emphasis added)

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<sup>33</sup> Thomas Pearson treats Wordsworth's social and political relationship with Sir George Beaumont with an in-depth look at Wordsworth's concern for place as well as his growing conservatism through his work with the Coleorton inscriptions. For more, see "Coleorton's 'Classic Ground': Wordsworth, the Beaumonts, and the Politics of Place." *The Charles Lamb Bulletin: The Journal of the Charles Lamb Society*, no. 89, 1995, pp. 9-14.

In these few lines, while still expressing his desire to hear from Beaumont, Wordsworth shows compassion for his friend in that he does not wish Beaumont to write unless he feels well. He somewhat forcefully asserts that unless “impulses of genial spirits . . . prompt” the writing, Beaumont should not pick up the pen. Oscillating between hearing from his friend and telling him not to worry about writing if he is not in the right spirit of mind to do so, Wordsworth’s own writing seems to perform a kind of anxiety, which gives the sense of his eagerness to keep the exchange in motion while waiting on his friend to improve enough to write. This anxiety seems evident as I read more fully into the passage and consider Wordsworth’s own peripatetic habits of composition as he instructs Beaumont to take it easy.

He creates a palpable moment in a few select sentences at the opening of this letter and creates a dueling dialogism that can be overheard; his many voices here are full of feeling. The contents of the letter reveal that a melancholy Wordsworth has been thinking a great deal about his “friend and sometime patron,” and the occasion to write this letter to him shows Wordsworth in an anxious state over not only Beaumont’s wellbeing but also quite possibly his own (Pearson 9). He has not heard directly from Beaumont, but it is possible that he has imagined hearing from him or anticipated never hearing from him again, and this kind of anxiety over the projected dialogism becomes fully apparent in the writing.

Wordsworth includes a brief excerpt from book eight of *The Prelude* in this letter that furthers my reading of anxiety as it connects to hearing and sound. The lines included are from the opening of the book: “‘What sounds are these, Helvellyn, that are heard’ to ‘their calm abode’” (qtd. in “Wordsworth to Sir George Beaumont . . .”; emphasis original).<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> In MS. A (DC MS. 52) of *The Cornell Wordsworth*, the eighth book begins with the line “‘What sounds are those, Helvellyn, which are heard” (732). For the full excerpt, see the first

Of these lines, Wordsworth notes that the passage “has been extracted not so much from any notion of its merit, as from its standing more independent of the rest of the poem than perhaps any other part of it” (“Wordsworth to Sir George Beaumont . . .”). If this passage independently stands, then Wordsworth asserts a power in sound and hearing that goes beyond what even he recognizes. Therefore, while this textual anxiety may have something to do with the loss of his brother, which Wordsworth alludes to later in the letter, I suggest that it might have more to do with the role that hearing sounds plays in igniting Wordsworth’s imagination, in the all-encompassing space of his experience: a comprehensive physical and psychophysical hearing of sounds through and beyond the senses that affected not only how he listened but also how he saw, what he attended to, how he felt, what he touched, and what and how he thought. My thinking in this chapter explores Wordsworth’s poetry on these terms and makes the case that this understanding is vital for the way we engage his work today.

Some time ago, I listened to the *TED Radio Hour* on NPR titled “Extrasensory.” The programming discussed how humanity might extend the experiencing of the world by “extending our senses” and “going beyond them” (“Extrasensory”). One of the speakers who had given a talk on the subject was Neil Harbisson, a sonochromatic cyborg artist; born unable to see color, Harbisson uses a prosthetic device to hear colors, and he hears colors “beyond the range of human sight” (“Neil Harbisson”). The “eyepiece that he wears on his forehead . . . transposes the light frequencies of color hues into sound frequencies” (“Neil Harbisson”). What fascinates me about his artwork and his identification as a cybernetic organism is that through his art and identity, he “blurs the boundaries between sight and sound” and not necessarily through his

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sixty-one lines of *The Thirteen-Book Prelude by William Wordsworth*, edited by Mark L. Reed, vol. 2, Cornell UP, 1991.



reliance on technology but rather through his perception of the world as it becomes enlarged by the blurred boundaries the technology creates, much like the widening of the world of synesthetes (“Neil Harbisson”). Harbisson’s daily reality is broadened, and his state of being introduces new insights about the relationship between sight and sound senses, humanity and technology demarcation, and selfhood and world through the disintegration and integration of perceptual distinctions. From Harbisson and his blurring of boundaries, I draw parallels as I further consider the softening of boundaries in poetry with regard to sound and hearing through the poetic mode, which I defined in chapter one and has to do with how the relationship between perceived speech sounds and the acoustic signal that carries them is understood.

Wordsworth’s perception of the world blurs boundaries between sight and hearing, and his poetry becomes a kind of technology itself that allows us to participate in his perceptual processes. For example, in “Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey . . .,” Wordsworth creates new ways of thinking about the sense of sight as well as about hearing and the affective force of sound; he writes that he has “learned / To *look* on nature . . . / *hearing*” to feel (89-91; emphasis added)

A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean, and the living air  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things. (95-103)

“To look on nature” as an active process here seems to function liminally, as the infinitive form of the verb seems to follow the verb “learned,” while the “hearing” seems a constant process, a continuous action, operating syntactically as either a present progressive verb without its usual

auxiliary or as a gerund naming a general activity; Wordsworth's verb placement seems to perform a hearing-seeing-learning motion expressed through every aspect of external nature that also modifies Wordsworth's feelings; even while he writes that the "eye and ear . . . half-create, / And what perceive . . . [he is still] well pleased to recognize / In nature and *the language of the sense*, / The anchor of . . . [his] purest thoughts" (107-10; emphasis added). In this movement-driven moment, I read this "language of the sense" as the physical force of sounds—as pressure disturbances—as well as the psychical forces of nonphysical sounds—as audible impressions propagating as ideas or associative phenomena: what I called in chapter one physical or fictive vibratory motion. This Newtonian-like motion with its external and internal vibrations impressed Wordsworth's mind. For Wordsworth, as this poem relates, psychical sound and motions ("Five years have passed . . . / . . . and again I hear") were as affect-producing as the acoustic events of physical ordinary moments where the eye seemed to seize control; however, the hearing seems more important than the "behold[ing]" as I interpret the work (5). Wordsworth cannot help but see what he hears, but like Harbisson, he also hears to envision sights that have never been seen. The "sense" reinforced in these lines is hearing: ear sense that actively creates and makes the world available through the process of perceiving sound(s) and not sound(s) as represented in the poetry but sound(s) "half-creat[e]" during the act of direct perception ("Lines . . ." 107).

Not isolated examples of Wordsworth's emphasis on sound and motion, these lines and this poem overall exist to highlight a poetic state of being as one I see operating very much like Harbisson's cyborg identity. The *OED* defines "cyborg" as one "whose physical tolerances or capabilities are extended beyond normal human limitations by a machine or other *external agency that modifies the body's functioning*" ("cyborg, n."; emphasis added). Perhaps this comparison is farfetched, but I see Wordsworth's identity as a poet as one who uses poetry, an

external agency as much as it is an internal one, during imagination, recitation, and reception, to modify the body—his own and others’—through the affective embodiment of verse through psychical and physical sounds.

In his autobiographical epic *The Prelude* of 1805, he reveals his ability to negotiate multiple consciousnesses simultaneously using sound signals to overthrow the tyrannical eye as a way of creating a tangential motion and a rhythm beyond meter to extend imaginative vision and to capture in verse in *tranquility*, beyond speech and nonspeech modes through the poetic mode, what he calls “Nature’s circumambient scenery” (7.257) and “the circumambient World” (8.47).

This notion of circumambience arises from the wedding of external nature and the internal mind, as these are not mutually exclusive, and Wordsworth’s poetry performs this process with its sound signals whether read, recited, heard, sung, or imagined. In the 1802 “Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*,” he writes that “the power of the human imagination is sufficient to produce such changes even in our physical nature as might almost appear miraculous” (611). While I cannot speak to the miraculous, I acknowledge that the ideas of sound present in the ecology of *The Prelude* initiate a tactile hearing, a three-dimensional experience of the spaces Wordsworth has created.

In this chapter, I relate Wordsworth’s idea of circumambience to what Jonathan Kramnick terms the “physical surround” (*Paper Minds*, 59). I consider Wordsworth’s recitation of the poem to Samuel Taylor Coleridge on the grounds of Coleorton, near Ashby de la Zouch. I make a claim about the layered consciousnesses represented in *The Prelude* and construct a theory of the imagination that considers Wordsworth’s text and its contribution to Coleridge’s definition of the primary and secondary imagination. I engage with Erin McMullen and Jenny R. Saffran to consider possible developmental relationships between music and language for

learning and memory as these links emerge throughout *The Prelude* of 1805, and I analyze Wordsworth's musical and linguistic processes in book two on these terms. Later in the chapter, I focus on book nine, Residence in France, and also consider book ten, Residence in France and French Revolution, to examine how Wordsworth treats sound in these books and how it changes in the later revisions of the work. In my review, I evaluate Wordsworth's multiple revisions as potential sound events/sound figures. I consider Sophia Rosenfeld's survey of the histories of sound and the connection between auditory and political imaginations. She writes about the history of hearing and its relationship to modern democratic politics, focusing specifically on "the constitutional protection of free speech" at the beginning of the French Revolution and its cultural and physiological effects (Rosenfeld 317). I suggest the political implications of clairaudience for both Wordsworth and his audience in his context and ours and argue for the importance of examining auditory attention and imagination. Throughout, I examine acoustic environments, i.e., possible literal and figurative soundscapes, located in the 1805 version, and in locations where these texts might have been recited, acoustically or psychoacoustically, and analyze select auditory scenes to look closely at not only the acoustic environments made possible by sound imagery but also those sonic environments populated by certain linguistic/speech sounds, dialogisms, etc.

Jonathan Kramnick examines the Wordsworthian concept of circumambience, what he calls "an aesthetics of presence" (*Paper Minds*, 57) or the "physical surround" (59), tracing its origin and investigating its developments through theories of perception in the eighteenth century. In his work, he explores "how perception could be understood as direct contact or entanglement with external objects," situating "eighteenth-century aesthetics of presence"

alongside current conversations about “ecologically situated or embodied cognition” (Kramnick 57). He traces an

antirepresentational model of perceptual experience during the period, a model that considers perceiving to be an active process—more on the pattern of touch than vision—and that proposes that what the senses do is make the world available rather than hold it at a skeptical remove. The antirepresentational view forms something of a countercurrent within the eighteenth century’s dominant theory of perception. On the dominant account, ideas or impressions provide an internal picture of an external object or event or state of affairs . . . [ , but through the antirepresentational view, we can see] . . . works . . . that propose that what minds or works of art do is not so much represent things as make them present to us, or that concentrate on the process rather than the product of perception. . . . [T]his line of thinking may be thought of as active or relational. (Kramnick 57)<sup>35</sup>

Kramnick’s work brings together discrete strands of thought necessary to substantiate my argument about Wordsworth’s overall use of sound, which I understand as both physically and psychophysically touching or felt, a direct perception. Kramnick explains Thomas Reid’s theistic ideas on direct perception, claiming it to be a way of “using our bodies to bring the world . . . within reach,” as “god has provided a body that is adroit at moving through and so perceiving the world” that makes perception an “achievement of the entire body” (68).

This achievement, per Kramnick, “might be considered to be the creation of presence,” achieved ideally in Wordsworth’s soundscapes but also accomplished in the real world of the reader (68). Presence was a prominent philosophical and aesthetic term and was connected to

the writing of Reid’s friend and correspondent Henry Home, Lord Kames . . . [and] his 1762 *Elements of Criticism*, [wherein] Kames devotes the chapter on ‘the emotions caused by fiction,’ along with intermittent discussion across the treatise, to describing how ordinary perception achieves presence and how literary art can create presence in turn. He begins by stating his commitment to direct perception and naïve realism: ‘That the objects of our external senses really exist in the way we perceive is a branch of intuitive knowledge: when I see a man walking, a tree growing, or cattle grasing, I cannot doubt but that these objects are

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<sup>35</sup> For Kramnick’s complete tracing of the eighteenth-century’s dominant theory of perception, see chapter three, “Presence of Mind,” from *Paper Minds: Literature and the Ecology of Consciousness*. U of Chicago P, 2018.

really what they appear to be.’ . . . Perceiving the world is a form of acting within it. The goal is to figure out how literary works can create the sense of one doing the same thing. When passing things are laid open in our daily lives, they are ‘perceived as in our view, and consequently as existing as present’ [i.e., ‘real presence’] . . . [, but] [w]hen a reader is ‘thrown into a kind of reverie’ and is ‘in a state forgetting that he is reading, he conceives every incident as passing in his presence, precisely as if he were an eye witness’ [i.e., ‘ideal presence’] . . . . Ideal presence is not an image of a thing; it is the thing itself. . . . The mind just grasps the literary world as present, not as a picture of something else. (Kramnick and Lord Kames qtd. in Kramnick 68-69)

Lord Kames’s ideal and real presence can be teased out of Wordsworth’s poetics if we engage in receiving his poetry on these terms. Ideal presence operates because the poetry is figurative, but real presence is achieved in the work when a real audience is addressed, whether through recitations, dialogisms, apostrophes, sound figures/imagery, etc. If we take Kramnick’s antirepresentational view further, we might extend his explanations of sight to operate likewise in hearing to understand these sound signals in the verse as moments not only as figurative ideas but three-dimensional things that do more than represent a sound ideally in a literary text but actually call it into further expression to lay it before our view in a real act of direct perception. If we understand that the sounds are part of our reality even while figurative, we can approach the effects of these sounds on attention, particularly in Wordsworth’s poem to Coleridge.

The antirepresentational view of perception is particularly helpful in the way I encounter Wordsworth’s acoustic ecology as three-dimensional and interactive, which must be accepted in order to understand the process of attending. According to Mari Riess Jones, any “linguistic interaction effectively controls the attending of the parties involved and in so doing establishes for them a shared perspective from which to assess the event itself” (“Attending to Musical Events” 91). By selecting certain sounds from Wordsworth’s three-dimensional poem, we can better interpret the utterance because in making the sound selections, other auditory input can be deemed irrelevant or noted as of lesser importance, allowing us to “draw close” to certain sounds

within the poem “and inspect its detail,” performing what Jones calls “*analytic attending*” while also investigating the “entire contour” of the soundscape as a thing in itself—as an ideal yet real presence (“Attending to Musical Events” 92; emphasis original). Each listener attending to the poem will make varying choices in sound selection, and these variations, in Jones’s view, are caused by the structure of an object (i.e., a poem), which “can affect the movements and scanning patterns of an attender”: “the attender is free to speed up, slow down, and move in and out to gain various perspectives” (“Attending to Musical Events” 92). Though not music, a poem has a musical structure—if not several embedded musical structures within a larger whole—and listeners are invited to “assume different perspectives” as the poem “turns, twists, deforms, expands, and transforms” because poems are “melody-rhythm objects” or “events where the configurations based on relations in pitch and time with ‘shadings’ offered by loudness and timbre form serially coherent integrated patterns” (Jones, “Attending to Musical Events” 93). Analytic attending involves “attending to local detail . . . over relatively small time periods,” but “future-oriented attending . . . permits attending to global changes in form and supports anticipating of longer range future events such as endings of phrases and movements” (Jones, “Attending to Musical Events” 93). Jones argues that “it may be possible for listeners to achieve different temporal perspectives by relying on different” modes of attending; in effect, listeners “can attend alternately over relatively short and relatively long time spans to track different sorts of relations in an unfolding composition” (“Attending to Musical Events” 108). She writes that a “listener’s acceptance of one or another perspective may be partly under the control of the composer [(i.e., the poet)] . . . and partly modulated by artistic devices of the performer, but ideally it is a *shared* perspective” (Jones, “Attending to Musical Events” 108; emphasis original). Such temporal interaction between the composer (i.e., the poet) and the performer (i.e., the

reader-listener-performer) substantiates the importance of recognizing the three-dimensional acoustic ecology of poetry.

The temporal perspectives Wordsworth has preserved in the many manuscripts of *The Prelude* are already dynamic in that “there is no ‘definitive’ textual state” of the poem, according to Nicholas Halmi:

The two faircopies of *Prel 1799* (MSS U and V) are not identical, and both contain Wordsworth’s post-1799 revisions. The two faircopies of *Prel 1805* (MSS A and B) are also not identical, and both contain revisions (themselves not identical) of 1818-20. The first edition, although reflecting Wordsworth’s final revisions, was set from an inaccurately copied manuscript (MS E) and included emendations not authorized by the poet himself, while the two faircopies of *Prel 1850* (MSS D and E) are separated by seven years and differ significantly from each other. Thus editors who wish to recover a particular version of *The Prelude* from the manuscripts, as opposed to merely reprinting the first printed edition, must construct a text, reconciling divergent readings (or privileging one over another) and ignoring later revisions. . . . Since the 1970s a critical consensus has emerged in favor of *Prel 1805* as the most artistically accomplished and ideologically palatable of the three canonical versions of the poem . . . . The . . . 1805-06 version of the “Poem to Coleridge” . . . [is] the version read by Coleridge himself. . . . [P]revious critical editions of *Prel 1805* are based on MS A (although inevitably with occasional readings supplied from the more complete MS B), as it was written first and was more thoroughly revised by Wordsworth himself . . . . (165)

Due to variability and lack of textual stability in the many manuscripts due to draft preparations, revisions, etc. and because of the revised MS. A’s reputation as “the most authoritative record of the poet’s latest C-stage revisions,” which represent “the form (as far as determinable) in which Wordsworth left the poem when he desisted . . . in 1818-1820 . . . [and] was later used as the basis of copy text for most of MS. D (Reed 5), I look closely at *The Prelude* of 1805 in “MS. A (DC MS. 52), with *Apparatus Criticus* of Variants in MS. B (DC MS. 53) and Letter of July 5, 1805” in consultation when necessary with the “C-Stage Reading Text,” as these appear in Mark L. Reed’s Cornell University Press edition of *The Thirteen-Book Prelude* (1991).



Wordsworth's recitation of the poem to Coleridge took place on the grounds of the Beaumont estate at Coleorton, near Ashby de la Zouch, Leicestershire, in January 1807, and my intent is to examine the text as much as possible within the context of this event and this landscape, which create a soundscape for the text although outside of it. Wordsworth himself designed part of the landscape, the Winter Garden, near where the performance was given for an intimate audience, which included Dorothy Wordsworth, Mary Wordsworth, Sara Hutchinson, and Coleridge (Halmi 557), and this location enhanced the recitation experience so much so that the event provoked praise from Coleridge (Paley 45). "[C]ertainly intended to be the primary reader of the manuscript" of the work, Coleridge experienced the recitation in this constructed place (Reed 479-80); as spectator, he was moved by "both literary and pictorial associations" in this place (Anderson 210). Coleridge, in his poetic response in "To William Wordsworth," memorializes the recitation as he celebrates that Wordsworth "first sung aright" (4) his "prophetic Lay" (3), emphasizes Wordsworth's bardic nature, and glorifies his friend's poetic powers, all while "precisely plac[ing] the event" with his poem's original title "To William Wordsworth: Lines composed, for the greater part on the Night, on which he finished his recitation of his Poem (in thirteen Books) concerning the growth and history of his own mind. Janry., 1807. Coleorton, near Ashby de la Zouch" (Paley 45).<sup>36</sup>

The Wordsworths had been living in Coleorton, Leicestershire, in a house—Hall Farm (Home Farm, according to Anne Anderson 210)—provided for them by the Beaumonts from late October 1806 to June 1807 (Halmi 557). Some suggest that the Coleorton Estate "in the winter of 1806/1807 often marks the termination of Wordsworth's 'Great Decade,'" but Jessica Fay

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<sup>36</sup> For a closer look at Coleridge's poetic response to Wordsworth's recitation, see Morton D. Paley's "'To William Wordsworth' and Coleridge's Later Poetry." *The Wordsworth Circle*, vol. 26, no. 2, 1995, pp. 45-50.

argues that it “should be remembered as the site of a poetic renewal” (307, 313). During this time, Wordsworth worked with a Leicestershire gardener, Mr. Craig, to develop and design a Winter Garden on the grounds (Fay 307). It was then, Fay highlights, that “Wordsworth began a study of monasticism and hagiography that would form the basis of the poetry he would compose over the next five years”; his “gardening was a vehicle for memorialization and poetic inspiration” (308). Fashioning a cloistral space in his Winter Garden design that “modified eighteenth-century principles of picturesque landscaping in order to create prospects of contemplation,” Wordsworth’s “restricted physical space” was intended to foster meditative experience (Fay 308, 313). Richard Payne Knight theorized in *An Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste* (1805) that the “imagination was to be stimulated by associations” (Anderson 209), and Wordsworth’s design reinforced that

‘[t]o a mind richly stored, almost every object of nature or art . . . either excites fresh trains and combinations of ideas, or vivifies and strengthens those which existed before: so that recollection enhances enjoyment and enjoyment brightens recollection.’ (qtd. in Anderson 209)

The Coleorton estate and the Winter Garden for Wordsworth were natural, physical manifestations of circumambience, where “the imagination was to be stimulated by reshaping nature” (Anderson 210).

The reshaping nature here is not only the agent for stimulating the imagination but also the object that the stimulated imagination reshapes. The symbiotic interaction never stops if we view the process as a real act of direct perception. What Coleridge called the esemplastic power of the imagination might better explain such interdependence. In chapter XIV of the *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge writes that a poet

brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity that blends and (as it were) fuses, each into each, by that synthetic

and magical power to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination. *This power*, first put into action by the will and understanding and retained under their irremissive, though gentle and unnoticed, controul [sic] . . . *reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities:* of sameness, with difference; of the general, with the concrete; the idea, with the image; the individual, with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness, with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion, with more than usual order; judgement [sic] ever awake and steady self-possession, with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement; and while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature; the manner to the matter; and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry. (173-74; emphasis added)

Therefore, in this circumambient world where Wordsworth performed this particular recitation, the real presence of Wordsworth's reshaped natural environment created not only ideal presence through his poetic performance but also real presence for Coleridge, as Wordsworth's reshaped environment in poetic recitation became Coleridge's stimulating and reshaping nature, which embedded itself in Coleridge's own reality and poem (Anderson 210).

In my investigation of how the work begins, I find that breaking down parts of the lines of the first book by syntactic categories into isolated parts of speech and their rhythmic consequences tells us much about Wordsworth's process of creating presence. In effect, the introductory verse paragraph of the first book does not "celebrate . . . W[ordsworth]'s sense of release and purposefulness . . . [in] Grasmere in late 1799," as Stephen Gill states in his notes about the opening (728). Rather, these lines reveal a three-dimensional revising writer in a state of constant change trying to move himself to write about himself as subject, to recollect his experiences in childhood and otherwise, and to move his readers along through meandering lines—all with great difficulty. The poem performs such a writer rhythmically and grammatically through the poet's excessive use of prepositional phrases, the use of the there-transformation construction, and the clashing of objective, possessive, and subjective case pronouns. In the preamble, the obfuscation of the subject in line one and the overflow of

prepositional phrases and pronouns following suggest a sense of clumsiness and lack of focus in the verse that conveys the sense of composing in uncertainty and distraction and hints to the impending spirit of childhood Wordsworth develops more fully later on in this book and later ones.

The grammar forces the reader through a rhythmic impression of uncertainty by obscuring focus through the chains of prepositional phrases in the preamble. In *Rhetorical Grammar: Grammatical Choices, Rhetorical Effects*, Martha Kolln and Loretta Gray claim that while “it’s not at all unusual to” compose “sentences with prepositional phrases strung together in chains,” those “sentence[s] that end . . . with . . . long string[s] of prepositional phrases often lose . . . focus” (153). A sentence’s “usual rhythm pattern follows the principle of end focus; it calls for the new information to be the last or next-to-last structural unit” (Kolln and Gray 153). While Wordsworth’s sentences are composed in the form of blank verse lines, and they do not all end in chains of prepositional phrases, a proliferation of prepositional phrases occurs in the very first verse paragraph.<sup>37</sup> These phrases move the reader through a rhythmic impression of

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<sup>37</sup> Julia S. Carlson notes that in 1802, “experimental, unrhymed verse-forms” were considered “untraditional and unEnglish,” and blank verse was considered “not musical but mechanical, dissonant, and dangerous”; blank verse was thought to be “the vehicle of foreign and Jacobinical ideas” (1). The “legitimacy of blank verse . . . was at stake” (4) as “merely the visual effect of print” (4), but John Thelwall “disseminated a system of ‘elocutionary analysis’ that would help readers to reveal the poet’s ‘rhythmus,’ release their constrained tongues, and encourage the development of their intellects and feelings” (Carlson 2). Carlson writes that printed inscriptions in travel books and guides helped “to draw the sound out of the blank verse” because the “depictions also refocused the literature . . . and shaped the reading of a verse form recognized, and also criticized, for its difficult enjambments and unrestricted placement of pause and variety of feet” (7). These guides “mixed graphic, metrical, and mensural grammars to give the traveler unparalleled access to the finest ‘combination of sublimity and beauty’ in Britain . . . while ‘elevat[ing] the feelings and improving the heart’” with goals akin to Thelwall’s *rhythmus*, which helped “retune” the “minds and bodies to the ‘feelings and principles of nature’” (Carlson 8). For more, see Carlson’s *Romantic Marks and Measures: Wordsworth’s Poetry in Fields of Print*, U of Pennsylvania P, 2016.

uncertainty, wonder, and lack of focus and function to “obscure the main subject and action” of some of the sentences and verse lines (“Reduce . . .”). The grammar here seems to perform the symbiosis between this distracted textual identity (perhaps identities) and Wordsworth himself as an audience of that identity: one subject struggling to break free, in a sense, while the other one—the adult, philosophic Wordsworth—steadies the reins.

In the poem to Coleridge, Wordsworth’s shifting consciousnesses operate antithetically for him to come to terms with and to know himself completely and in a way that would have appealed to his friend’s later philosophy. In Coleridge’s Thesis VI in chapter XII of the *Biographia Literaria*, he writes about the identity of the subject and object as these both exist together or “manifest . . . in the SUM or I AM,” which he terms “spirit, self and self-consciousness” (151). For Coleridge, “object and subject, being and knowing, are identical, each involving and supposing the other” (152). He writes that

it is a subject which becomes a subject by the act of constructing itself objectively to itself; but which never is an object except for itself, and only so far as by the very same act it becomes a subject. It may be described therefore as a perpetual self-duplication of one and the same power into object and subject, which presuppose each other, and can exist only as antitheses. . . . [I]f we elevate our conception to the absolute self, the great eternal I AM, then the principle of being, and of knowledge, of idea, and of reality, the ground of existence, and the ground of the knowledge of existence, are absolutely identical. Sum quia sum; I am, because I affirm myself to be; I affirm myself to be, because I am. (152)

The poetry performs the philosophy as Wordsworth shifts consciousnesses toward the consciousness that gains more control in the second book, but his contemplative poetic self cannot fully relinquish authority to the less experienced, less mature textual self just yet; they are at odds, and the prepositional phrases showcase this tension. On my count, the introductory verse paragraph alone includes 33 prepositional phrases. These phrases provide information with regard to “[d]irection,” “[p]lace,” “[t]ime,” “[d]uration,” “[m]anner,” and “[c]ause” (Kolln and

Gray 152). Looking at a representative sample, the first cluster of prepositional phrases describes the “blessing” mentioned in line one in some aspect, but we cannot tell what agent provides the “blessing” or what the “blessing” really is. Is this “blessing” (1) the favor of God? a gift? a prayer? The recollection of childhood, etc. from the adult textual self? We cannot know, and Wordsworth does not say. We only see that it is active “in this gentle breeze” (1). It rushes in “from the green fields” (2), “from the clouds” (2), and “from the sky” (3) to “beat . . . against my cheek” (3). It is on its way.

Wordsworth himself is the subject, but he divides himself into parts; in so doing, Wordsworth performs not only Coleridge’s later philosophy but also his ideas on the primary and secondary imagination as well as fancy, which likewise operate as Wordsworth’s own. Wordsworth obscures the main subject and action in the first few lines by delaying both initially with what is known as the there-transformation construction, which “shift[s] the stress” while it “delays the subject, thereby putting it in line for stress” but without making any claims about the agency or action in the first line (Kolln and Gray 112). By creating textual selves that coexist and complement one another all while functioning as true identical subjects, Wordsworth uses the primary imagination to “rep[eat] in the finite mind . . . the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM” (Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* 167). This faculty is akin to what Wordsworth calls the “Imagination,” which functions “to incite and to support the eternal,” and these textual selves repeat eternally through their preservation within the text (“Preface to *Poems* (1815)” 636).

In this repetition, Wordsworth creates, using the secondary imagination, “an echo of the former [Coleridge’s ‘perpetual self-duplication’ from Thesis VI], co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation” (Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* 167). With the secondary

imagination, Wordsworth “dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create,” all while “struggl[ing] to idealize and to unify” (Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* 167). He uses Coleridgean fancy as he employs “a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space” and “blend[s]” it “with” as well as “modifie[s]” it “by that empirical phaenomenon [sic] of the will” that “equally with the ordinary memory . . . receive[s] all its materials ready made from the law of association” (Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* 167).

Wordsworth ruptures and fragments himself through time in recollection to give voice to the other textual selves he brings into our view in the work, which he does through the faculty he too calls “Fancy:”

The law under which the processes of Fancy are carried on is as capricious as the accidents of things, and the effects are surprizing, playful, ludicrous, amusing, tender, or pathetic, as the objects happen to be appositely produced or fortunately combined. Fancy depends upon the rapidity and profusion with which she scatters her thoughts and images, trusting that their number, and the felicity with which they are linked together, will make amends for the want of individual value: or she prides herself upon the curious subtilty and the successful elaboration with which she can detect their lurking affinities. If she can win you over to her purpose, and impart to you her feelings, she cares not how unstable or transitory may be her influence, knowing that it will not be out of her power to resume it upon an apt occasion. (“Preface to *Poems* (1815)” 636)

Whereas Imagination is defined as “the faculty which produces impressive effects out of simple elements” (Wordsworth, “Note to *The Thorn* (1800)” 593), Wordsworthian “Fancy” is defined as “given to quicken and to beguile the temporal part of our Nature” (“Preface to *Poems* (1815)” 636), a faculty whose “power by which pleasure and surprize are excited by sudden varieties of situation and by accumulated imagery” (“Note to *The Thorn* (1800)” 593). Coleridgean and Wordsworthian Imagination and Fancy are not mutually exclusive: they work together for Wordsworth: “Fancy ambitiously aims at a rivalship with the Imagination, and Imagination stoops to work with the materials of Fancy” (“Preface to *Poems* (1815)” 637).

We can see these faculties at work in the preamble and throughout *The Prelude*. His use of “there is” before the buildup of prepositional phrases is “referred to as ‘the existential there,’” which “affirms that the something is, or exists,” but Wordsworth starts with that something without telling us anything about where it comes from or how it gets there (Kolln and Gray 112-13). He then further obscures the subject through the prepositional phrases that follow, and if we look closely at sections that include an accumulation of prepositional phrases, we see that such moments of obscurity are followed by an assertion of the subjective *I*. However, before those moments where the subjective *I* more forcefully expresses Wordsworth’s agency, there are other moments where the usage of the objective “me” and possessive “my” entangles within the lines to give the impression of experience along with the accumulating experience of rhythm—while still tethered to the subjective. Considering the thematic dimensions of the text, we are aware that Wordsworth is opening up his autobiographical poem in a reflective tone, and this there-transformation, pile up of prepositional phrases, and blending of pronoun cases convey that affect-producing rhythm that allows him to move himself to compose while also emphatically moving us to follow him through the lines to see what is being born. Likely representing Wordsworth’s poetic contribution to Coleridge’s definition of the primary and secondary imagination and fancy, this creation of presence becomes even more evident considered beyond Wordsworth’s grammatical structure toward the acoustics that the poem generates.

Through a dialogism with himself—his many textual selves—and Coleridge in this section of book one, Wordsworth controls his audience’s attention and chooses his theme all while using physical and psychophysical sound signals to create what seems a distracted yet focused speaker. Having meandered from the preamble and first book to this point, Wordsworth and his use of iambic pentameter has been directing our attention. Natalie Phillips writes that



“[c]ognitive science confirms . . . [that] regular rhythms . . . structure cognition and facilitate comprehension, guiding our attention in time” (122). While we have been paying close attention to that one rhythmic thread, Wordsworth has also been controlling the shifts between consciousnesses through linguistic interaction to provide us with shared perspectives: we know there is the presence of a “gentle breeze” (1), but he has also admitted to the presence of “A corresponding mild creative breeze” (43). Both are audible and suggest a quickening of the mind, but he describes the “corresponding” one as “vital” (43-44) and what he also calls “a redundant energy” (46) that has “become / A tempest” (45-46) and is “Vexing its own creation” (47). Wordsworth is using a consistent rhythm pattern in the meter while building up an audible “tempest” in his mind (and ours) to write the poem, to tell about the growth of his mind, and to tell it to Coleridge, but he seems to be having difficulty thinking here, and the cyclonic visual and sound imagery suggest that he seems uncertain of what is to come, longing for a sense of security and a power that he at present cannot seem to grasp, except through a regular iambic pentameter rhythm pattern and desultory imagery, though it remains on the horizon:

. . . ‘Tis a power  
 That does not come unrecognis’d, a storm,  
 Which, breaking up a long continued frost  
 Brings with it vernal promises, the hope  
 Of active days, of dignity and thought,  
 Of prowess in an honorable field,  
 Pure passions, virtue, knowledge, & delight,  
 The holy life of music and of verse. (47-54)

The lines express his hopes for a creation as well as an acknowledgment that this process can be trusted. He has been here before, and he knows he is on the verge of creating. Lines 41-73 reveal that Wordsworth is trying to listen in to himself to compose, but perhaps his ear is not content with the rhythmic pattern alone of what Jason David Hall calls “unmitigated meter,” which he defines as “analogous to the monotonous ticking of a clock—on its own mechanically

‘oversmooth’ and perfectly isochronous” (*Nineteenth-Century Verse and Technology: Machines of Meter* 21). Hall states that “a line comes to life when we speak it so as to introduce ‘departures from the modulus’ of meter” (21). As an oral composer, Wordsworth would have certainly agreed with this claim and, as Julia S. Carlson states, would have recognized that while “[b]lank verse could achieve aesthetic coherence and force when interpreted by bodies and voices on the stage . . . , . . . on the page it seemed to lack vitality and form” (*Romantic Marks* . . . 10). If Wordsworth sensed this fact and knew of “Enlightenment initiatives to improve the reading aloud and speaking of English,” in composing, he would have worked out such issues in his chosen form by particular attention to accentual expressions and the relationships between such (Carlson, *Romantic Marks* . . . 9).

In my reading, the sound signals in these lines that demand attention come not from the alteration of unstressed and stressed syllables but from the relationships between the words at the ends of lines 48, 49, 50, and 51—respectively “storm,” “frost,” “hope,” and “thought,” each one with complementary assonance. That he placed “storm” and “frost” at the ends of the lines here highlights not only that these words share a vowel sound but also that they can each emphasize the qualities of the other, and the same can be said of “hope” and “thought.” The punctuation in MS. A also signals sound in this section of the poem with commas after “storm” and after “thought” indicating the sense of multiple pauses representative of being in pensive states—one contemplative state directly after the “storm” and another meditative one after “thought.”

Wordsworth describes the “storm” (48) as one “breaking up a long continued frost” (49). External sound signals proliferate beyond the poem’s actual linguistic soundscape but exist as part of the poem’s acoustic ecology, as these words alone project auditory hallucinations of the material sounds of a frost quake, creating them as present for an attentive reader of sound. A

frost quake is an “extreme cold weather phenomenon” that is quite loud, causing “strange sounds” (de la Garza). Alejandro de la Garza writes that frost quakes are “[a]lso called ice quakes or cryoseisms, [and] the cracking or booming sounds occur when moisture below ground starts to freeze and expand.” He explains that when the ground starts this process, “it can move rocks and soil, occasionally causing them to crack, thereby producing . . . loud sounds” (de la Garza). In this hectic moment, Wordsworth writes of his own expectations, he addresses Coleridge directly, “Thus far, O Friend! (55), he recollects his abilities, past and present, “did I . . . / . . . / Pour out, that day, my soul in measur’d strains” (55-57).<sup>38</sup> He seems both confident and insecure at once in this section of book one, anticipating what is coming but also struggling to bring it forth, and he knows he will do it as he has in the past: “My own voice chear’d me, & far more, the mind’s / Internal echo of the imperfect sound: / To both I listen’d, drawing from them both / A chearful confidence in things to come” (64-67). The text here demonstrates the poet’s precise control over readerly attention and sound signals, as Wordsworth brings an attentive reader into his acoustic ecology.

Wordsworth’s acoustic ecology existed in January 1807 as it does now, as one both three-dimensional and interactive. While we do not have the means to listen to Wordsworth directly recite *The Prelude*, “never so called by W[ordsworth]” (Gill 727), the sound signals in his poem to Coleridge still function not only as figurative ideas but also as three-dimensional things that do more than represent sounds ideally in his text—the sound signals call the sounds into further

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<sup>38</sup> See Julia S. Carlson’s chapter on the compositional history of Wordsworth’s poem to Coleridge, wherein she states that “[d]irect address to Coleridge does not appear in the initial draft of *The Prelude*” (232), treats “literary exchange that depended on absence,” and examines the relationship between Wordsworth and Coleridge through forms of address, paying particular attention to apostrophe and address in *The Prelude* (226). *Romantic Marks and Measures: Wordsworth’s Poetry in Fields of Print*. U of Pennsylvania P, 2016.

expression to bring them before our ears. In what follows, by selecting certain sounds from Wordsworth's three-dimensional poem, I interpret the utterance of the work by interacting with Wordsworth's creation of sound presence: to do so, I listen to an oral recitation of the work, one performed in 2010 by the Faculty of English at the University of Cambridge over almost ten hours, and I follow along with MS. A (DC MS. 52) to analyze physical and psychophysical sounds in books two, nine, and ten. As I include certain sound selections in my analysis, I note that other auditory input is of lesser importance, namely that of the readers' voices performing the recitation. While I consider performance to be an important part of recitation, my aim in this kind of listening is to draw close to certain sounds within the poem to inspect them in detail and perform analytic as well as future-oriented attending to the soundscape as a thing in itself—a created presence—to show that layered consciousnesses exist in *The Prelude*, both distracted and philosophic, and layered sonic environments, too, which reveal different but interdependent temporal perspectives as well as necessitate a reading of the work that takes the direct perception of sound and attending into account.

I begin my analytic attending to sound in book two but move to future-oriented attending with a look at the manuscript of books nine and ten with consideration given to the temporal perspectives Wordsworth creates in his layered sonic environments, textual and others, so that we might consider how these poetic perspectives unfold over time and how they might be theoretically seen as sound in varying degree: music, language, speech, etc. Wordsworth recreates the environment of his experiences, and we should be listening for the sound signals because they are indicative of the knowledge gained within those environments. In effect, the auditory environments or acoustic ecologies that Wordsworth creates in *The Prelude* should be understood within the context of his original exposure to them as well as from our own current

temporal positions. Just as these sound signals were important during Wordsworth's original moment of perception, they were also important to Wordsworth's original recitation audience, and they should be equally as important presently.

Wordsworth opens book two with a restatement of what he has initiated in book one by directly addressing Coleridge in a conversational though deep philosophic contour that eases us later on into the circumambience of a more distracted acoustic ecology. The first 47 lines of this opening include emotive and cognitive interjections, which operate much like physical sounds, such as those of direct address to Coleridge, "Thus far, O my Friend!" (1), and exclamatory expressions, such as "Ah!" (19), the first word of the first trochee found in my reading where the iamb has shifted to produce an auditory effect indicative of Wordsworth's more mature speaking voice. These sudden utterances are bound by the context of Wordsworth's sense of audience as well as by his feelings at this point in the work with regard to that audience and seem almost improvisatory. Jeffrey C. Robinson writes that

[t]he characteristics of improvisation transferred by Romantic poets to their own work include . . . spontaneity and participation in the present, stress on the non-semantic elements of language including sound and gesture, speech of persons other than the poet . . . , and a focus on the mind-in-motion. (95)

Almost all of these characteristics can be seen in the mind's eye with the recitation in the ear. During these lines, Wordsworth moves through this voice toward his sense of textual plurality and the understanding that the philosophic timbre resonates in conjunction with other sounds—indeed another voice that belongs to another time and place.

Throughout *The Prelude* of 1805, links emerge between music and language, and in the second book in particular, they connect specifically for learning and memory as Wordsworth locates the infant sonic environment during his "Hard task to analyse a soul" (232). Erin McMullen and Jenny R. Saffran consider possible developmental relationships between music

and language for learning and memory in their work. McMullen and Saffron state that “spoken languages” and “music . . . reach our perceptual system as frequency spectra, arrayed as pitches,” so an attentive reader must take this claim into consideration when considering Wordsworth’s poetic consciousnesses, especially with regard to sonic environments in the text as well as those available during the recitation (290). McMullen and Saffron write that “from the perspective of the youngest listeners . . . the similarities between music and language may be heightened” (290). In young listeners, knowledge is “gained implicitly from the musical exposure that is ubiquitous in children’s lives,” and such a process “involves inducing structure from environmental input” (McMullen and Saffron 290). What I gather that this means for Wordsworth is that music and language are quite similar and even complementary in his view with regard to poetic creation. Undoubtedly, Wordsworth’s sound signals that he includes in his work are important as they help convey his spots of time so notable in his poetry. In effect, this infant sonic environment is a spot of time that he captures to emphasize “the progress of our being” (239), a textual self he credits as “the first / Poetic spirit of our human life” (275-76).

According to McMullen and Saffron, “in the absence of experience, infants chunk auditory space into the speech sound repertoire from which human languages sample,” which seems to me to be the equivalent of or close to what Reuven Tsur calls the poetic mode, explained in the first chapter of my work (292). Recall here that there are multiple modes of listening: Tsur writes that “[s]peech researchers speak of a speech mode and a nonspeech mode of listening,” but he proposes a third mode, which is the poetic mode of speech perception, “where people attend to the clear-cut phonetic categories, but some of the inarticulate, precategory auditory information does reach awareness” (“The Poetic Mode of Speech Perception Revisited . . .” 20). Essentially, Tsur argues for the validity of “a string of phonetic

categories underlain by a stream of precategorical auditory information” (“The Poetic Mode of Speech Perception Revisited . . .” 20). Tsur suggests that “the reader or the poet has an option to switch between three aspects, as the context may demand” as they attend, highlighting that “poets and vocal performers have their own techniques to weaken or strengthen the boundaries” that exist in the auditory stream (“The Poetic Mode of Speech Perception Revisited . . .” 21). Tsur’s research into the poetic mode paired with McMullen and Saffran’s work emphasizes Wordsworth’s expressions with regard to “the infant Babe” (237). As McMullen and Saffran claim that infants “show preferences for particular types of musical sounds,” and “prefer consonant intervals over dissonant” ones, they reinforce that infants also “must learn the specific features of the systems in their environments” and “are able to learn which sounds mark meaningful differences in their language before they have extensive access to word meanings” (292). Since they suggest that the environment is so important in their research into musical and linguistic processes, McMullen and Saffran reinforce Tsur’s theories in terms of what he argues with regard to context. In a poem that retraces originary moments of perception and recreates those moments for an audience, tonality and quality of sound, speech sounds, consonance and dissonance, environments, language differences, and meaning-making are tightly bound together in both phonetic and precategorical auditory information. If, in early processing (and even fetal learning), prosodic “patterns of rhythms, stress, intonation, phrasing, and contour” are salient, as McMullen and Saffran claim based on their research, then these same patterns and other auditory information as composed/performed by the poet and/or imagined by audiences are worthy of our attention (294).

Wordsworth’s verses dedicated to “the infant Babe” represent his own sense of analytic attending to a sonic environment—a circumambience—that he creates as present for himself and

his audience in this second book. With his “best conjectures,” Wordsworth calls forth this “Babe” in order to capture the acoustic essence of such a context (238-39). The sound patterns he composes in such a sonic environment are experienced as “relatively opaque speech categories” and “as abounding in rich precategorical auditory information reverberating in the back of our mind[s]” (Tsur, “The Poetic Mode of Speech Perception Revisited . . .” 1). In the foreground of this textual moment, we hear the verse as written syntactically, grammatically, phonetically, and musically, and we recognize the poetic patterns as shaped by Wordsworth, but in the background, and as we read with an understanding of Tsur’s poetic mode, we begin to understand that the dense texture of this selection resonates not only physical sound but also psychophysical, or psychophysiological, sound—inner hearing—that populates the sonic environment of this poetic soundscape just as much as Wordsworth’s own verses. We hear Wordsworth’s dialogism as he communicates his lack of confidence in the possibility and his doubt in the notion that he can actually recollect anything from infancy. Even while we see the strong visible caesura where “Bless’d the infant Babe” begins in the middle of line 237, we hear the break in the line and the insecurity with the undertaking through the long pause before he begins again after having circumlocutorily stated that a human “soul . . . / . . . / . . . / . . . / . . . / Hath no beginning” (232-37). This sense of self-dialogism is heightened through his use of the parenthetical: “(For with my best conjectures I would trace / The progress of our being)” (238-39).

The uncertainty with which Wordsworth begins this section of the book mirrors the improvisatory sense and seeming lack of focus from book one and further emphasizes the antithetical relationship that his perpetual self-duplication produces, as shifts between these subjects occupy textual space in constant tension to represent one subject as fully as possible. It



is here I note yet another connection between the linguistic processes of Wordsworth's poem and the musical processes of it. The text operates very much like a prelude in its complexities of introducing something else while maintaining autonomy, an almost reluctant progression of interdependence shown in the following lines through a self-duplication that Wordsworth introduces through the self-duplication of soul from Mother to Babe:

. . . blest the Babe  
Nurs'd in his Mother's arms, the Babe who sleeps  
Upon his Mother's breast, who, when his soul  
Claims manifest kindred with an earthly soul,  
Doth gather passion from his Mother's eye!  
Such feelings pass into his torpid life  
Like an awakening breeze, & hence his mind  
Even [ ]<sup>39</sup>  
Is prompt and watchful, eager to combine  
In one appearance, all the elements  
And parts of the same object, else detach'd  
And loth to coalesce. Thus, day by day,  
Subjected to the discipline of love,  
His organs and recipient faculties  
Are quicken'd, are more vigorous, his mind spreads,  
Tenacious of the forms which it receives.  
In one beloved presence, nay and more,  
In that most apprehensive habitude  
And those sensations which have been deriv'd  
From this beloved Presence, there exists  
A virtue which irradiates and exalts  
All objects through all intercourse of sense. (239-60)

The lines, while revealing the hesitancy of the Babe's presence to merge with the Mother's, unveil the inevitability of independence yet certainty of relationship and symbiosis—not with only the Mother but indeed also with nature and his audience. Wordsworth writes that

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<sup>39</sup> Reed states in his note in MS. A that here “MS. M reads ‘Even in the first trial of its powers.’ MS. C fair copy reads as MS. A. The line was deleted there in D-stage revision” (525). See *The Thirteen-Book Prelude by William Wordsworth*, edited by Mark L. Reed, vol. 2, Cornell UP, 1991.

“Emphatically such a Being lives, / An inmate of this active universe,” who “receives” from nature but also “gives again” (265-68). This Babe’s mind,

Even as an agent of the one great mind,  
Creates, creator and receiver both,  
Working but in alliance with the works  
Which it beholds.— —Such, verily, is the first  
Poetic spirit of our human life . . . . (272-76)

From lines 239-76, we hear the Babe’s initiation into the physical surround of his Mother’s environment and into our own circumambient world. We hear the connection forming between the Babe and a surrounding nature, which in Wordsworth’s infant’s textual environment is populated by the Babe’s Mother and her figurative environment. However, in the audience’s environment, this surround Wordsworth creates is fully present and populated by a physical, natural landscape with an external soundscape of its own that commingles with that created textually by Wordsworth—for Coleridge, this surround is Coleorton; for present-day readers, this surround varies, but it is no less important neuroaesthetically.

The literal physical surround beyond the figurative soundscape within the poem exists for the readers as part of the acoustic ecology of the poem, and it should be considered as a significant aspect of the aesthetic experience. Pearce et al. argue in their research that “[h]umans . . . are drawn to the aesthetic features of objects and the environment around them”; they claim that “[s]uch features are not mere inconsequential adornments; they influence people’s affective responses, decisions, and behavior” (265). Just as Wordsworth here attempts to poeticize the psychological and neural processes as they happen for the Babe, he not only creates this presence for his audience but also drives these processes with the help of external, material conditions. Thus, the circumambience of such an environment, as Wordsworth writes it here, is active, engaging, and full of impressions, as the lines perform the motion of back and forth between the

Babe and Mother, Mother and Babe, creators and receivers both of nature. The Babe's sensory experience as perceived from this selection of book two operates in echo-like manner, as though the exchange and activity involved in the space of these lines reflects a bond reverberating beyond Babe and Mother rumbling toward Wordsworth's textual self and the poet as composer/reciter—a resonance heard through direct perception by his audience then and now. William Gardiner writes that “[t]o hear one's own voice returned, as if it were the voice of another, is perhaps more surprising than the reflection of one's self in the glass,” but he acknowledges the “resemblance between the effects of light and sound” and states that sound “may also be converged into a point like light” (288). It may be that in this moment of the text, Wordsworth recognizes the “extraordinary duration” of such an echo and accepts that his ear is “deceived in not distinguishing the reflected sounds from those which are direct” in his soundscape (Gardiner 288-89). The poetry blurs boundaries between what is textual surround and physical surround and therefore must be understood through Kramnick's antirepresentational view.

Wordsworth placed value on the attention to sound as part of book two and emphasized his own fascination with listening to sonic environments, both unseen and seen. He states in lines 280-83 that from his

. . . early days,  
Beginning not long after that first time  
In which, a Babe, by intercourse of touch . . .  
. . . held mute dialogues with . . . [his] Mother's heart,

he realized the value of a “more exact / And intimate communion” that brought with it a “palpable access / Of knowledge” (299-306). As I hear it, this selection conveys the importance of solitude, of silence, and of listening to acousmatic sound—these “mute dialogues” are unseen sounds, and his way of listening here “is cultivated when the source of sounds is beyond the

horizon of visibility, uncertain, underdetermined, bracketed, or willfully and imaginatively suspended” (Kane 7). These invisible sounds as I read them bring with them moments of what

Wordsworth calls

. . . silent inobtrusive sympathies  
And gentle agitations of the mind,  
From manifold distinctions, difference  
Perceived in things where to the common eye  
No difference is . . . . (316-20)

These unseen sounds are akin to thought and produce fictive vibratory motion in the mind of the listener. For the sense of these lines, comparatively, remember Johnny Foy as described in lines 452-56 of “The Idiot Boy” and all he had heard and seen “in the moonlight” as “he had been / From eight o’clock till five.” Acoustically, the selection here is steady yet soft and produces an effect of the voiceless alveolar fricative consonant (s), a common yet notable sibilant sound that draws attention to itself in recitation as well as creates contrast with the vowel sounds present.

The contrast created by the assonance in these lines is what I find most prominent, with Wordsworth’s use of the vowel (i) in each line conveying a nonreferential sound that mimics the referential image the lines provide through their proairetic code—resulting in a sound much like a stutter seeming to interrupt the flow of thought or rather emphasizing the inarticulate or uncertain nature of this kind of experience with acousmatic sound. However, physical vibratory motion also appears as significant in this section of Wordsworth’s poem, as he writes,

. . . for I would walk alone  
In storm & tempest, or in star-light nights  
Beneath the quiet Heavens; and, at that time,  
Have felt whate’er there is of power in sound  
To breathe an elevated mood, by form  
Or image unprofaned: and I would stand  
Beneath some rock, listening to sounds that are  
The ghostly language of the ancient earth,  
Or make their dim abode in distant winds.  
Thence did I drink the visionary power. (321-30)

Wordsworth here creates through the acoustics of these lines as well but also more clearly articulates the psychoacoustic, semantic, and aesthetic situation that explicitly connects this passage to possible physical sound, situating this presence more abundantly in the ears—his own and his audience’s—for sensory perception, which can be further analyzed. These ten lines possess a sinuous melodic contour beyond the consistent meter, one Wordsworth creates again through contrast, but this time using sound signals that move beyond acousmatic sound in isolation where thoughts seem to hang suspended in inarticulate presence toward a sonic environment of motion where Wordsworth’s poetic physical surround with all its weather rage or clear skies communicate active sound patterns well recognized and sure to arouse emotion.

Such active sound patterns and sonic environments of motion are also evident in later books of *The Prelude*, in particular in book nine, Residence in France, and book ten, Residence in France and French Revolution, when Wordsworth communicates the spirit of his dwelling in France and later return to England, though these later sonic environments are alive with commotion and in general less harmonious. The dissonance in the textual environments Wordsworth creates in MS. A. alone serves as a marker for the less organized register these later books bring to the ears. Reed’s notes on the transcription of the text as a whole and the many hands and voices involved with its production hint at the chaos Wordsworth was trying to capture in these later books, as there were mistakes, misnumberings, corrections, erasures, deletions, revisionary copying, late insertions, stitching variations and re-stitchings, editorial supplements, pencil and pen-and-ink entries, transcription variants, unauthoritative recopying, faint entries, etc. to bring the work cohesively together. However, this particular “manuscript was probably never stitched into a unitary whole” and was “probably never handled as a physical unit” (Reed 472). It went through several “processes of revision and adjustment,” according to

Reed's notes (482), enduring "incidental revision perfecting and improving" it "into early 1807" (483). Wordsworth's multiple revisions function as potential sound signals themselves. In effect, in MS. A, future-oriented attending by reading through books nine and ten is no easy feat but presents rather a pleasurable difficulty.

The markings within the manuscript create a surround all their own, a textual environment that reflects the sonic environments of motion—and commotion—Wordsworth wants his audience to hear especially in books nine and ten. One prominent feature of the sonic environment in my examination that Wordsworth creates in book nine is the presence of swarms. One passage appears early in the book:

I stared and listen'd with a stranger's ears  
To Hawkers and Haranguers, hubbub wild!  
And hissing Factionists with ardent eyes,  
In knots, or pairs, or single *ant-like swarms* (55-8; emphasis added)

Another passage appears later:

The Land all *swarm'd with passion, like a Plain*  
*Devour'd by locusts, Carra, Gorsas, add*  
A hundred other names, forgotten now,  
Nor to be heard of more, yet were they Powers  
Like earthquakes, shocks repeated day by day,  
And felt through every nook of town and field. (178-83; emphasis added)

In both instances, Wordsworth seems to capture of the enormity of the sounds of his experiences with his usage of a single word. These images operate audibly as swarms denote multitude and clusters of activity and noise. According to the etymology of the noun "swarm" in the *OED*, the term's

root is usually identified with that of Sanskrit *sváрати* sounds, resounds, *svará*, *svára* sound, voice, and connected further with *sur-* in Latin *susurrus* hum, Middle Low German *surren* to hum, Middle High German *surm* humming, Lithuanian *surmà* pipe, etc. But the etymological meaning may be that of agitated, confused, or deflected movement, in which case *swarm n.* and *swerve n.* might arise from parallel formations on the same

base; compare the parallelism of *swarm* v.<sup>2</sup> and *swarve* v.<sup>2</sup>; Norwegian dialect *svarma* to be giddy, stagger, dream, and *svarva* to turn, go in a circle, stagger, be agitated (see *swarf* v.); Icelandic *svarfla* and *svarmla* 'praecipitanter contrectare, huc illuc raptare'; also the meanings of German *schwärmen* to swarm, rove, riot, fall into reverie, rave. ("swarm, n."; emphasis original)

The word itself is associated with sound(s), voice, humming, agitation, and motion, and its etymology suggests that Wordsworth's use of it is layered here to represent the swarm in all its possible denotative and connotative associations. The usage of this term in this particular selection in my oral reading and examination of the audio in the Cambridge recitation seems to require the use of the entire mouth for reading not only this word but these passages fully aloud. It requires energy, contains pulmonic consonants that require air pressure from a reader's lungs, and reinforces the density of this moment for Wordsworth's ears, his body, as well as his mouth during recitation. The burdening experience of sounding this word emphasizes the pressure as the result of the dissonance felt at the time, a palpable moment Wordsworth delivered to his audience during his recitation and still delivers today to an audience employing a tactile hearing of the poem and engaging three-dimensionally with the work in direct perception.

The disharmony of this textual environment reinforces the relationship between the auditory and political imaginations that Wordsworth seeks to establish in these two books, as he represents his time in France and what his days were like during that time and space; his aim is evident as his repetition of the words "time," "France," and "day" throughout the two books highlights. Gill writes that Wordsworth was "travelling on foot across France" in 1790, "a year after the first Revolution, joyfully responding to the movement of the spirit of a whole people," but he states that the "evidence of *The Prelude* clearly has to be treated with caution" since Wordsworth in 1804-05 was "shaping his earlier experiences to a particular end, to the affirmation that beneath the turmoil ran steady the stream of his true self" (xiv-xv). Rosenfeld

probes the connection between the auditory and the political imaginations while considering the “cacophony that followed the constitutional protection of free speech at the onset of the French Revolution of 1789” (317). In her examination, she anticipates the political theory of Jacques Rancière, a present-day French philosopher whose work blends politics with aesthetics. According to Rosenfeld, Rancière “proposes that the tacit boundaries around not only what is sayable but also what is audible at any moment in time determine to a significant degree the dominant or ‘explicit’ political order” (317n3). Rosenfeld also states that sounds considered together—as sonic environments, soundscapes, and auditory landscapes, etc.—“are perceived, hierarchized, regulated, manipulated, and endowed with meaning differently in different places and at different times,” which means that “different forms of auditory experience or modes of auditory attention” are “dependent not only on the sounds themselves but also on the specific interpreters and their settings,” even while “certain biological constants,” such as the ear and the voice, exist (318). Considering Rosenfeld’s argument, what seems cacophonous in Wordsworth’s textual environment relating his time in France can be viewed as Wordsworth’s attempt at bringing his national political allegiance into clearer view at a later time than when his political sympathies were disconcerted, his allegiances torn. The political implications of clairaudience for both Wordsworth and his audience in his context and ours necessitate the importance of examining the acoustic ecology he presents in these two books. Rosenfeld writes that “politics in the early years of the Revolution might best be understood as a collective effort by ordinary people to make themselves heard by whatever means they had at their disposal” (330). Sonic inequality existed, states Rosenfeld, and frustrated, “new citizens tried repeatedly to force the experience of listening on others,” as during these early years of the Revolution “the right to talk had not been translated into a right to be heard” (329). Wordsworth’s efforts in these



books could be understood as his own means within the noise of the day to either maintain passivity or actively make himself heard in dramatic print.

I maintain that a consideration of the text as it was recited in its context to Coleridge accentuates the text's function as less like that of print culture and more in the style of theater. Susan Maslan writes that theater in Revolutionary France "was distinct . . . because it was experienced immediately, emotionally, and collectively"; she states, "[t]he product of experience in the theater was therefore unanimity, and the sentiments shared were of singular intensity" (33). Wordsworth in recitation could "forge communities of sentiment" with this text, and the sonic environment he describes allows him to share his experience with his audience (Maslan 33). And forge them he does by sharing not only his physical and psychophysical experiences of sound during this time of political unrest but also his personal experiences.

His actual experienced and perceived sonic events fold into his literary ones, and one in particular, the narrative of Vaudracour and Julia, itself functions as sound, preserving Wordsworth's narrative voice even while memorializing Wordsworth's "patriot Friend" Beaupuis (554). The revolutionary culture was polyphonic, and for Wordsworth, such auditory agitation influenced the aural way he mentally recuperated, reinterpreted, and represented this moment in his work for others to feel and hear it. By the middle of book ten, Wordsworth's voice shifts back from the self he duplicated to tell of the Revolutionary events to the voice present near the beginning of book two, and he creates an echo as he repeats a line word for word from the earlier book. The line from book ten is as follows: "We beat with thundering hoofs the level Sand" (566). The line from book two is "We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand" (144). The repetition exists in the C-Stage Reading Text in the Reed volume as well as in MS. A, and the only difference in these lines is Wordsworth's capitalization, which could be purely

accidental. The capitalization could point out, however, Wordsworth's political allegiance to the "Sand" of England or to illustrate the condition of post-Revolutionary France. Whatever the reason for the echo, the cadence of the repeated line is consistent, making it a noticeable line for entraining, and the rhythmic line stood out for that reason during my reading aloud. The beats of the line perform the action of the "thundering hoofs"; the evenness of "the level sand" mimics the balanced sense of emotion in these lines, and the voice of these lines, especially in book ten, seems to sound much like the steady, deep philosophic contour heard in book two. That presence has returned through the repeated line, and it is heard through the aural qualities of the form.

Sound perception through the literary form provides opportunities beyond ideal representations. Form and figurative language create possibilities for the experiencing of reality beyond the page that has existed before, elsewhere, and still exists through the calling up of that reality that the imagination allows for in an audience. The tactile engagement with the whole of form by immersion operates in an ecomimetic way, through the participation in form by a reader, whereby the full immersion of the self into the form creates a reality all its own. Wordsworth's own system of poetic creation began with this realization, and through this system, he gave life to the possibility of multiple consciousnesses and therefore layered sonic environments, which an attentive reader will hear. The synthesis that Wordsworth's poetry arises from negates the duality of sensual and ideal. It fills in the gaps between the two to create a living form. In the following chapter, I will engage with *Peter Bell, a Tale in Verse* with this theory in mind, treating paratexts, critical reviews, and parodies as potential sound events/sound figures and discussing hearing and its relation to faith and acoustic environments.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE PERPETUAL ONTIC NATURE(S) OF WORDSWORTH'S NARRATIVE FORM: *PETER BELL* AS REFERENTIAL AND NONREFERENTIAL SOUND ART

In the last chapter, I analyzed sound signals in *The Prelude* of 1805 by examining William Wordsworth's layered consciousnesses or perpetual self-duplicating textual selves located within the sonic environment of his text using analytic and future-oriented attending while also considering the relationship between those consciousnesses and the circumambience of nature, or natures. My intent was to argue that the sound of the physical surround—the acoustic ecology—that existed for Wordsworth both in his verse and in his life materialized and still materializes through the multiple temporal perspectives that are located not only within the formal space of the poem to Coleridge but also within the realm of direct perception and reality that the poem calls to both mind and ear. Such an environment, and likewise the subject as well as soundscape, perpetually duplicates to inhabit the present as much as the past as a presence, as presences. Indeed, these presences that Wordsworth created in the acoustic ecology of his poetry—and still creates for readers today—are important aspects of the aesthetic experience of his poetry as sonic. The various stimulating soundscapes of Wordsworth's experience continue to resonate for his audience, just as they did for his auditors in his time. The argument seems obvious enough to make about a poem that traces the growth of the poet's mind, a reflective poem where Wordsworth engages with his many life experiences to seek the origins of his poetic vocation through spots of time using memory and philosophic speculation.

To complement chapter three and its focus on Wordsworth's biographical details, in this chapter, while I sustain and complicate the argument began in the last, I forgo such biographical considerations and examine how my position holds up in practice in *Peter Bell, a Tale in Verse*. I argue that this poem illustrates how language and formal narrative structure leverage affective forces of sounds when we listen closely. I propose a theory of reading that pays close attention to the embodied situation that Wordsworth constructs through his narrative structure. With consideration given to the ontic condition of nature, I make an argument for the presence of nature (or natures) and audience embodiment that allows for variability in perception, as these presences and bodies exist in many forms with diverse capabilities; they did so in Wordsworth's moment, and they do so now, so variations in how we define hearing and listening with regard to poetic sound must be considered. Our literary use of such terms demands revision for inclusivity: the audible world exists differently for everyone.

With a consideration of affordances in mind, I examine the 1819 first edition of Wordsworth's narrative poem. In this investigation, I observe the context of *Peter Bell's* publication history through its paratexts, treating in my study reception, critical reviews, parodies, and authorial commentary, as such material for all intents and purposes functions as sound events/sound figures. I once more engage with Rosenfeld's work because in it, she discusses hearing and its relation to acoustic environments. Thematic, political, and linguistic sonic environments (i.e., literal and figurative soundscapes) are possible within this narrative poem, and attending specifically to recitations, physical acoustics, and psychoacoustics, I imagine auditory scenes, acoustic ecologies, and ways of knowing these soundscapes could make possible. I argue that the narrative form of *Peter Bell* functions as referential and nonreferential sound art with aesthetic implications.

In the sense that the work is sounded, dialogic, listened to, and recreated within and beyond itself through its physical and psychophysical sounds, dialogisms, auditors, and recitations past and present, this narrative poem is much about the physicality and affective force of sound if we listen closely. Through the acoustic ecologies of language and formal narrative structure, Wordsworth's poem generates affordances of embodiment: these affordances allow for direct and indirect perception of the textual environment through the poet-narrator's tale, the constructed oral recitation, Peter Bell's tale, and the audience's participation. This narrative poem was possibly intended for the first edition and might have been considered for the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, but Wordsworth chose "more statically descriptive" works instead, leaving this almost-lyrical ballad—a comic narrative in digressive and enthusiastic, almost Sternean, style—"to languish unpublished," according to John E. Jordan (5-6). Perhaps the reason Wordsworth held onto the poem for so long without publishing it is due in large part to its dynamicity, a consequence of the sense of orality the work reinforces through its form.

Attention to the possibilities of orality had already begun in the eighteenth century with the novel, so Wordsworth conceivably understood these possibilities as just as suitable for poetry. Novelists employed "the representation of native and foreign voices" in their work "to address problems of modernity," and James Mulholland recognizes Tobias Smollet's use of "dialect" and Laurence Sterne's own "idiosyncratic form" as illustrations of this kind of representation (4). Wordsworth's concern with community and the problems of those living in isolation from community would have certainly been cause enough to address such issues through his poetic form. The form ensures the work's inclusive nature in its storytelling, as it allows for both the representation and participation of many voices both within and beyond the poem's acoustic ecology. Because "the emergence of the novel forced a paradigm shift for

orality,” Mulholland writes, quoting from Alexis Tadié’s work, that its “use of conversation . . . [became] a means of ‘addressing the changing modes of narrative’ that amalgamated storytelling conventions with an emphasis on the literacy of the book” (4). According to Mulholland, “[t]he new reading protocols of the novel pushed readers to ‘apprehend the text with the prerequisites of an oral culture,’ that is, to ‘listen in’ on characters, ‘to participate in conversational exchange,’ which the novel presents as moments of dialogue” (4). These dialogic moments are familiar and easily recognizable to us as readers, marked as they are at times by quotations, grammatical choices, italics, speech markers, etc., but

while the novel promotes [such a] sense of presence primarily in moments of virtualized conversation, poetry offers the immediacy associated with the spatial proximity of oral performance. (Mulholland 4)

Mulholland suggests that poetry offers the sense of urgency and more direct involvement in its form, giving the impression that we are closer to and more involved with the oral performance. It is more of a presence. Wordsworth’s attention to the orality of form in his narrative poem perpetuates such sense of urgency, involvement, intimacy, and presence.

Mulholland also appreciates the showcasing of orality made possible in features of novelistic discourse, and he claims that orality’s “collision” with “the literate” is evident also in poetry; Wordsworth puts these features to use to showcase layered levels of circumambience or surround sound we locate throughout each section of his narrative (Mulholland 4). In writing and uniting many voices, both usual and unusual, in the sonic landscape of *Peter Bell*, Wordsworth takes direction from not only eighteenth-century novelists but also poets, as “eighteenth-century poetry was unique in its attempt to prefigure an aesthetic ideology that insisted on the immediacy of its oral voices and exotic speakers” (Mulholland 4). Wordsworth’s form sustains the eighteenth-century’s focus on immediacy and literacy, but his tale privileges the poem on these

terms and its utility in this sense. This attention to a sense of immediacy and literacy is evident throughout the work. Understanding literacy in its broader definition, we can see that the poet-narrator becomes more competent as he gains knowledge from his dialogic experience with his imagination, which teaches him not only the unlimited access he has to “the secrets of a land / Where human foot did never stray” (101-02) but also the value of the reality he experiences on his “darling speck” (50) and anticipates during his “life’s daily prospect” (149). The poet-narrator also learns from his constructed recitation audience how to begin his tale:

‘Good Sir!’—the Vicar’s voice exclaim’d,  
‘You rush at once into the middle;’  
And little Bess, with accent sweeter,  
Cried, ‘O dear Sir! but who is Peter?’  
Said Stephen,—‘’Tis a downright riddle!’

The Squire said, ‘Sure as paradise  
‘Was lost to man by Adam’s sinning,  
‘This leap is for us all too bold;  
‘Who Peter was, let that be told,  
‘And start from the beginning.’ (201-10)

In this brief section, we can see Wordsworth’s attention to speech markers, quotations, em dashes, all of which emphasize the many voices in discourse with and attentive to the poet-narrator’s tale-telling. Through these few lines, we become drawn into the poem as a presence, and we listen in to the sense of urgency, involvement, intimacy, and presence the verse demands. Another consequential example from this poem to the sense of immediacy and literacy is when Peter Bell grows more knowledgeable based on his engagement with his past during the telling of the tale of his life in the past as well as his present interaction with the ass and the community.

Peter’s voice penetrates the narrative through the poet-narrator’s tale-telling, and Wordsworth embeds other voices into sonic landscapes, or soundscapes, which resemble both literal and figurative acoustic ecologies. We hear the narrative through the voice of the poet-

narrator, and much like the poet-narrator in “The Idiot Boy,” he moves the narrative forward through interjections, both his own and from others in a figurative audience. This poet-narrator particularly reinforces the interplay of poet and readers-listeners-performers all the while through the interweaving of a constructed recitation as he tells Peter’s tale. The sonic landscape, or soundscape, that we hear as readers-listeners-performers is layered with the telling of the tale, with sound figures (i.e., sound images) from the poet-narrator’s imagination, as in the prologue, to sound figures from the constructed recitation complete with audience interruptions and digressive questions from the poet-narrator to build suspense and engage his audience to imagined sounds during Peter Bell’s imaginative soundscape, which includes silence, a loud, sorrowful cry from a child, and other penetrating resonances:

When hark, a burst of doleful sound!  
And Peter honestly might say,  
The like came never to his ears  
Though he has been full thirty years  
A rover night and day!

.....  
.....

What ails you now, my little Bess?  
Well may you tremble and look grave!  
This cry—that rings along the wood,  
This cry—that floats adown the flood,  
Comes from the entrance of a cave:

I see a blooming Wood-boy there . . . (656-76)

From these lines, we experience these layered soundscapes all at once. We share in Peter Bell’s experience of a never-before heard “doleful sound” (656). Then, the poet-narrator gives us options for what the sound is not, which lengthens the suspense and gives a reciting poet, such as Wordsworth himself, some time to think about what is coming next in the narrative. We know



the sound is not a “plover” (661), not a “bittern” (662), and it is not a “barking fox” (663). The sound is also not a “night-bird” (664), not a “wild-cat” (665), not a “silent cricket” (670), and it is not Peter Bell’s whistling (666-70). This sound has silenced Peter Bell, leaving both him and his ass as “still and mute” as Johnny Foy (“The Idiot Boy” 91). As Peter Bell pauses silently, the poet-narrator also pauses, allowing for an interjection from “little Bess” (671), which gives him more time to build suspense and further engage the readers-listeners-performers through tautology, repeating “This cry” (673, 674), which allows the minds of readers-listeners-performers (both real and imagined) to “luxuriate . . . in the repetition of words which appear successfully to communicate . . . feelings” (“Note to *The Thorn* (1800)” 594). Abruptly, once the force of sound has been leveraged successfully, the narration resumes, and the poet-narrator immediately transports everyone to the originary moment of the cry, where “the boy” (685) is “peep[ing]” (683) inside “the cavern’s mouth” (683) in search of his father, “the silent dead!” (685). The competing aural stimuli of these circumambient sonic environments are dynamic; there are variants in the sound imagery—silent pauses, loud cries, etc.—in the textual environment.

These sounds can be both referential and non-referential. For the referential sounds, the sounds we hear in the complex layered soundscape of Peter Bell might involve a person-to-nature/s relationship. In other words, we will listen to and hear what we hear based on our own natures. The cry Peter Bell hears in this part of the poem might be heard in accordance with our understanding of what a cry sounds like even while understood in the context of the poem’s semantic content. The sounds here, though, may also be experienced as non-referential sounds, which means that post-postmodern readers might react or respond to them or associate them as completely absent of any semantic register or stable reality. Joshua Wilner quotes Hartman, who

suggests that hearing might move “beyond the description of the scene” (qtd. in Wilner 28). Hearing sounds, both referential and non-referential, moves one toward a transcendental consciousness in poetic imagination, according to Wilner, and he writes that Wordsworth uses sounds “as the locus of imaginative projection” (28). Referential and non-referential sounds, then, should be both examined and reimagined as they are situated due to not only the temporality-induced effects but also the transcendental possibilities on the experience of the poem as aural.

Peter Bell’s epiphanic moment of imaginative projection showcases how hearing leads one to such transformative, transcendental consciousness, but this moment occurs slowly, and the psychophysical sonic landscape Peter imagines arrives as a result of the poet-narrator’s own telling of a tale he himself had “heard” (786):

I’VE heard of one, a gentle soul,  
Though given to sadness and to gloom,  
And for the fact will vouch, one night  
It chanc’d that by a taper’s light  
This man was reading in his room:

Reading, as you or I might read  
At night in any pious book,  
When sudden blackness overspread  
The snow-white page on which he read,  
And made the good man round him look.

.....

The godly book was in his hand—  
And, on the page more black than coal,  
Appeared, set forth in strange array,  
A *word*—which to his dying day  
Perplex’d the good man’s gentle soul.

.....

.....

I know you, potent Spirits! well,  
How with the feeling and the sense  
Playing, ye govern foes or friends,  
Yok'd to your will, for fearful ends—  
And this I speak in reverence!

But might I give advice to you,  
Whom in my fear I love so well,  
From men of pensive virtue go,  
Dread Beings! and your empire show  
On hearts like that of Peter Bell.

.....  
.....

—O, would that some more skilful voice,  
My further labour might prevent!  
Kind listeners, that around me sit,  
I feel that I am all unfit  
For such high argument.

I've play'd and danc'd with my narration—  
I loiter'd long ere I began;  
Ye waited then on my good pleasure,—  
Pour out indulgence still, in measure  
As liberal as ye can! (786-845; emphasis original)

I quote at length from the poem here to show that the poet-narrator's tale that he heard was as crowded with voices and dialogisms as the poet-narrator's tale of Peter Bell thus far. While interlocutors still hear the distant sound of the crying boy in the soundscape, which we associate referentially and non-referentially, now also in the distance coming from somewhere else, we hear our poet-narrator being told the tale he now lays open before our ears. We hear the "man . . . reading" (790) from his "pious book" (792), and we see "a *word*" (804; emphasis original) just as the man saw it; we hear it appear on the page of "The godly book" (801). Through psychophysical sound, this word becomes a word of our own making, non-referential to the text because we cannot know what the word was but referential to our own sense of the semantic

context of the poet-narrator's description as a word powerful enough to produce such a start and "Perplex . . . the good man's gentle soul" (805). Once we are involved psychophysically, then, we hear the poet-narrator break into our field of focus during his own tale to speak to "Spirits of the Mind" (833) in service of "fearful ends" (819), pleading in a spell-like manner and requesting for the Spirits to "show / On hearts like that of Peter Bell" (824-25). At this point, the poet-narrator realizes the deficiencies of his language to tell the tale any further, and he breaks away from his tale to address his own constructed recitation audience yet again. The poet-narrator then resumes the narrative to tell the tale of Peter Bell. In my view, this further layering of sounds is strategic on Wordsworth's part and moves beyond the physical sound figures expressed in my earlier excerpt that were included for their effects and affective force. This passage instead showcases psychophysical sounds and their affective power. At this point in the narrative, the emphasis the poet-narrator places on such psychophysical sounds himself, "Come, Spirits of the Mind!" (833), functions to draw our attention further into not only the tale of Peter Bell but also toward the power psychophysical sounds possess that can control interlocutor attention. Readers-listeners-performers are entranced because the voices shift so often, and they now focus more intently to listen to what comes next. Wordsworth preserves through his narrative form that there is an immediacy in the telling of Peter's tale, shared by the poet-narrator and any audience listening in.

Now that the poet-narrator has garnered attention through his rhizomatic physical and psychophysical soundscapes, the audience pays close attention to these physical and psychophysical sonic possibilities moving forward with the rest of the tale. As Peter Bell experiences his epiphanic moment, sound figures within the narrative begin to stand out solely for their affective force in Peter's soundscape. We seek to know how he will "ease his

conscience of its pain” (850), and we know that sound plays an important part in that process in large part because of how the tale has progressed thus far through a focus on physical and psychophysical sounds, as both have been interlaced within the figurative soundscapes themselves layered throughout the text, as we have thus far heard. Peter at this point in the narrative still hears the boy’s crying in the distance, and he is traveling with the ass on the way to the cottage of the drowned man to alert his family of his finding the body. He is prideful about his ability to help the drowned man receive his “Christian burial” (860), and in his moment of prideful boasting, we again hear physical and psychophysical sounds. First, we hear Peter knocking on “the lid” (870) of “His shining horn tobacco-box” (867). This activity acts as a spell upon the ass that Peter has previously badly abused, causing him to “turn . . . round his head—and *grin*” (875; emphasis original):

And, grinning in his turn, his teeth  
He in jocose defiance show’d—  
When, to confound his spiteful mirth,  
A murmur, pent within the earth,  
In the dead earth beneath the road,

Roll’d audibly!—it swept along—  
A muffled noise—a rumbling sound!  
'Twas by a troop of miners made,  
Plying with gunpowder their trade,  
Some twenty fathoms under ground.

Small cause of dire effect!—for, surely,  
If ever mortal, King or Cotter,  
Believed that earth was charg’d to quake  
And yawn for his unworthy sake,  
'Twas Peter Bell the Potter! (881-95)

Wordsworth employs sound in this passage to get Peter Bell’s attention, and from this point forward, as he continues to travel with the Ass, we see the process of Peter’s transcendence happen as a result of his attention to diverse sonic phenomena. While the knocking (870) was his

own physical sound, a pressure disturbance caused by his own hand, the “rumbling sound” (887) caused by the “miners” (888) was what Rosenfeld calls “uninvited sound,” which is “perceived as disruptive” (323). This disruption causes Peter Bell’s auditory imagination to materialize through “inescapable noise,” which “increasingly register[s] as a source of auditory distress” (Rosenfeld 323). Rosenfeld writes that in the nineteenth century, “certain kinds of sounds . . . remained intimately tied to the emotional life of communities insofar as they triggered memories and served as markers of family, faith, locality, region, or even nation” (324). We can hear these triggering sounds as the narrative continues, and we attend to the force of sound as it thus causes Peter Bell’s transformation through its physical and psychophysical power.

The materialization of his auditory imagination is illustrated in the text, and this sonic dimension of Peter Bell’s life leads him through triggering sonic phenomena on his journey of transcendence. We hear Peter Bell remember aloud the ““shire of Fife”” (912), where he ““married . . . [his] sixth wife!”” (915). We hear, along with Peter and the ass, the soundscape as they pass a noisy inn “Brim-full of a carousing crew, / Making, with curses not a few, / An uproar and a drunken din” (918-20). The poet-narrator interrupts to remind us of the importance of sound in these memories for Peter Bell:

I cannot well express the thoughts  
Which Peter in those noises found;—  
A stifling power compressed his frame,  
As if confusing darkness came  
Over that dull and dreary sound.

For well did Peter know the sound;  
The language of those drunken joys  
To him, a jovial soul I ween,  
But a few hours ago had been  
A gladsome and a welcome noise.

Now turn’d adrift into the past,  
He finds no solace in his course;—

Like planet-stricken men of yore  
He trembles, smitten to the core  
By strong compunction and remorse. (921-35)

These now-triggering sounds stand out to Peter Bell because of not only the physical noise of the miners with their gunpowder but also the psychophysical sounds of his inner noise.

Peter Bell's reality in this moment that both connects him and creates disconnect for him from what's natural in the rural context of the time is his realization of his own insignificance in the significance of his duty to find the family of the corpse he has stumbled upon by accident. His reality before and after his conversion comes from an understanding not of himself and his own ego as reformed but from his newfound attention to the reality of others—the corpse's reality of death and the aftermath of such on the community, and particularly the family he leaves behind within that rural community, a member of which whose cries he cannot stop hearing as the poet-narrator tells it. Peter Bell realizes that the horse has a real connection to real people despite Peter's ideal plan to take the horse for his own benefit. He realizes the widow's new reality in the loss of her husband, the children's reality of losing their father, and the infant's reality of what will be experienced as the father's absence. Wordsworth uses physical and psychophysical sounds within the layered textual soundscapes to draw our attention to them in the text (i.e., recitation) so that we will recognize the importance of them in our own physical realities and communities in addition to the psychophysical repercussions they perpetuate if we fail to attend, as Peter Bell historically has, evidenced by the text's detail to his memories of "A sweet and playful Highland girl" (938) that a life with Peter Bell stopped short:

And, when she follow'd Peter Bell,  
It was to lead an honest life;  
For he, with tongue not used to falter,  
Had pledg'd his troth before the alter  
To love her as his wedded wife.

A mother's hope is her's;—but soon  
She droop'd and pin'd like one forlorn;—  
From Scripture she a name did borrow;  
Benoni, or the child of sorrow,  
She call'd her babe unborn.

For she had learn'd how Peter liv'd,  
And took it in most grievous part;  
She to the very bone was worn,  
And, ere that little child was born,  
Died of a broken heart. (951-65)

His moment of transcendence comes gradually as he experiences these triggering sounds from his past in light of his new understanding of community, loss, absence, and change. Wordsworth uses physical and psychophysical sounds from Peter Bell's present soundscape and his past ones to show the importance of how the present soundscape for the widow echoes the past one for Peter Bell's Highland girl (938), but the layering of sounds has been leveraged to affect Peter Bell through the accumulation of sounds and their impact.

The poet-narrator's layering of physical and psychophysical sounds also reinforces the reach of the text beyond its original recitation or print context. To comprehend the reach of the text, then, it is necessary to define how the layering of audience contributes to the acoustics of the work. Important to realize are the listening audiences the text includes, addresses, and evokes, directly or indirectly. These audiences include the silent and audible textual auditors lodged within the poem as part of its narrative form and every realizable addressed or evoked future audience for both Wordsworth's recitations and printed works. This oral, social aspect of the work ensures its endurance and its capacity to renew itself and be renewed in the social contexts of its time, during reading and reciting today, and for prospective engagement. In this way, the poem exists as not only auditory imagery that is processed throughout the reading of the work but also as an extension of Wordsworth's reality and some material part of our own. The



poem materializes to synthesize with our environments, and we both perceive and use it according to our capabilities. The poem, therefore, in some sense, makes us whole while it lends itself to the creation of new natures, ontic existences, and sound art that allows for a new realization of an audible world within the lines of verse that can and does exist in the real world of the reader, one that reinforces the imaginary soundscape while also constructing a material soundscape through a revised understanding of poetic sound.

Hence, Wordsworth constructs both a disembodied as well as an embodied situation through his narrative structure, and acknowledged as an audible world existing in tandem with ours, the poem lives apart from its printed textual nature as sound art. The poem becomes freed from the concrete physical form—a printed, physical text—and is fully realized by these audiences in its audible form occupying a new material world. In this world, the poem is continually calling into being some other form of itself due to the nature of its audiences. The presence of nature (or natures) and audience embodiment allow for variability in perception, as these bodies of nature and audience exist in many forms with many capabilities. The poem thus becomes sound art. Appreciating *Peter Bell* as sound art requires hearing acts to be considered not only in terms of traditional hearing and neurotypical actors but also in ecological terms, where actors who are hard of hearing, deaf, or neurodiverse and their hearing acts are also given due consideration. It is then when we may take notice of the variants that exist in nature enough to query such variants. Such a model of interrogation changes the way we view Wordsworth's poetry and ideas on nature.

Paul Fry surveys definitions of Wordsworthian nature and its critical trajectory in science and metaphysics, and in his work, he suggests that Wordsworth's poetics and the nature of being for Wordsworth must be considered according to ontological views. He surveys Wordsworth's

status as a poet of nature as well as nature's status as an entity not only phenomenal but also relating to reality. If nature is both phenomenal and real, then the possibilities for what nature is become extensive. Fry quotes Alan Liu, who states that “nature is the name under which we use the nonhuman to validate the human,” a statement Fry translates by clarifying that “the reader who still thinks Wordsworth is a nature poet might want to say that nature is our own nonhuman existence, forgotten once named” (104). It may be difficult to define anything as nonhuman because to conceive any reality apart from human existence seems impossible since material knowledge disseminates through human existence involving some sort of constant exchange between inner and outer selves and worlds, experiences which ultimately cannot be nonhuman because always involving humans. Still, taking Liu's view and Fry's understanding under advisement, nature can be thought of as those moments of transcendence beyond our human selves that help us define who we are, though such nature may not yet be fully realized from subject positions. According to Fry, this understanding of nature points to “ontological unity” and not “the notion of nature as ‘environment’ . . . [or] organic-systemic totality” (99). And if it does not involve the environment or exist as some living system affecting the whole of humanity, then it functions distinctively according to each human and can determine the way Wordsworth is read and interpreted, according to Fry, who suggests that the ontology of nature—“its mode of being, its status as beings or as a being, its relation to human being, and the being of its being”—creates “confusion” (100). Fry writes that

[t]he results of this confusion can seem unproductive (it is in its ontological register that nature in the critic's hands gets lost in a chaos of referents); but for all who feel that the most characteristically brilliant verse of Wordsworth is always in some way an evocation of being as such, the subversion of meaning itself becomes a technique for making nature appear. (100)

Nature, thus, as per Fry's preference, which seems to align with Hartman's, is an entity that exists to harmonize as humans transcend environments, though humans may not recognize it as such or even be consciously aware of it.

So, nature is the constant motion of a breaking away from one sense of being toward some other transcendent sense of being and back to another sense of being informed by the transcendence. Nature is the existence of tension, the breaking away from and reattaching to imagination. In *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814*, Hartman writes on the concepts of both "apocalypse," which he refers to as the separation of the imagination from nature, and "akedah," which is a "Hebrew word meaning a bond or tying" that describes the kind of experience where there is a "marriage of imagination with nature" (225). Wordsworth uses the language of poetry to textualize and materialize the processes of both apocalypse and akedah, and this separation and union is reinforced during composition, recitation, and audition. Hartman claims, "Wordsworth thought nature itself led him beyond nature" in a "movement of transcendence," which he explains is what some "mystics have called the negative way," or "the progress of a soul which is *naturaliter negativa*" (33). In effect, the imagination is never quite beyond the bounds of ontic nature because nature exists in relationship to humans and human consciousness and thus words—the language of poetic imagination (33). This movement beyond nature is merely beyond Wordsworth's own nature, and I suggest that in *Peter Bell*, Wordsworth recognizes that the infinite imagination can move him beyond his own nature toward that of others, a recognition which is apparent in the poem as the poet-narrator and Peter Bell's character perform the process. This breaking away from and reattaching to imagination does not happen apart from internal and external environments. We cannot be apart from who we are, so the event is both private and social.

Poetry, for Wordsworth, creates defining realities and distinctive natures but seeks collective harmony, and it allows for an apprehension and perception of various natures. Variants of nature make sense if we take seriously that “Wordsworth’s observation is trained, in other words, on the point of intersection between human and nonhuman being in order to reveal something about the ‘widest commonality’ of being” (Fry 101). According to Fry, textual environments that include the “‘soft inland murmur,’ the thought of ‘more deep seclusion,’ the poet’s ‘repose’ under a dark tree from which he can view other ‘plots’—these are indications that the speaker is on the extreme verge of life, which is also of course to say . . . of social existence” (111). These textual environments are more than mental events; they are experiential and somatic. If we entertain Liu’s defining of nature and Fry’s illuminating explanation, Wordsworthian nature is to see nature beyond the greenness most often associated with it, but what this means is different for all, as nature beyond the green exists as the internal and external representation of realities, both physical and phenomenal. Nature is, for Wordsworth, determined by internal and external environments that exist in tension with and embed themselves within his textual environments, which are perceived distinctively by each reader according to their own nature(s). In other words, Wordsworthian nature is determined by the reader and how the reader uses what the poet provides. Taking reader involvement into consideration points more toward the “inclusive unity” that Paul Fry privileges over “any subtly exclusive totalization (‘aestheticization’) of the natural” (110). In this regard, the ecological unity promoted in the text is the result not of selective environments but of multiple ones in the service of establishing and maintaining a sense of textual unity, where the textual environment is shared by many voices with distinct natures moving toward the larger whole of the work.

Keeping Fry's critique of the notion of nature as environment close at my ear, along with his warnings of "hermeneutic circularity that undoes" (99) any potential defining of nature, I suggest that we situate nature according to Peter H. Khost's definition of the literary affordance and maintain an understanding of nature as an object in relation to its usefulness in the textual environment by all involved actors, which include not only poet and auditors but also intertextual and intratextual voices. The ecosystem of the poem, then, is a complex construction of the poet's own transcendence, and the work always exists beyond the individual poem to harmonize in its collectivity.

According to Khost, a forerunner of ecological psychology James J. Gibson introduced the concept of affordance:

[A]ffordances are uses individuals make of objects, events, concepts, or environments through relation to their discoverable features. . . . These uses may be conscious or unconscious and originally intended or unintended . . . its basic principle being that experiential, environment-bound relations are central to psychological experience (as opposed to only or primarily mental processes, for example). [Affordances involve] situational emphasis . . . . (19-20)

It is precisely this situational emphasis that I propose is important to the understanding of Peter Bell's transformation and Romantic recitation. These immersive environments are critical to poetry once the reader begins to take note of the perceptual offerings each environment holds. Khost maintains that "a reader's needs (and abilities, interests, situation, and so forth) contribute to . . . [their] making of literary affordances" (21). Readers, therefore, give to and take what they need from the sonic environment they find themselves a part of, like Peter Bell does during his epiphanic moment, both in and beyond the text, in order to experience the work more fully. Khost writes that "affordances are not only phenomenal (i.e., experiential), but they are also at the same time substantial (i.e., physical)," and experiential and physical readings offer more interpretive possibilities for the poetry as the literary affordances become more varied based on

the variants of nature made possible by due consideration of, attention to, creation of—and re-creation of—multiple sonic environments by diverse readers-listeners-performers (21).

That “an affordance is not a property of an environment [literary text] or of a person [reader] but rather a person’s [reader’s] ability to make uses of objects or environments [literary texts] by placing (i.e., identifying) and activating useful features in them” should be emphasized during the process of interpreting Romantic texts because it allows for reconsiderations of engagement that would be much like the engagement of the poets during their time (Khost 24). It materializes the period to show that these poems were indeed penned by living, breathing bodies who were absorbing their actualities to push beyond them. Khost anticipates that there might be pushback for his theory and writes that “it might . . . be objected that what I am talking about is interpretation, not affordance; . . . it might be said, affordance pertains to direct perception of physical environments, not to referential conception of abstract ideas . . . , [but] I’m talking about emergent textual utility that is (partially or initially) experienced or perceived directly, bodily, and situationally” (Khost 25). This definition points out the achievement of synthesis that might be reached if this theory is taken into account and put into practice. Such experiencing of poetry in this way makes it not only perceptual and experiential (i.e., direct) but also both conceptual and referential (i.e., indirect) (Khost 27). The ecosystem of the poem, then, while a complex construction and representation of the poet’s own transcendence from material circumstances, becomes rooted in a reader’s material circumstances to substantialize the very materiality the poet captured through the poetic form to begin with. The work then always exists beyond the individual poem in its material collectivity, past, present, and future.

The audible world exists differently for everyone, and I propose a theory of reading *Peter Bell* that takes not only the traditional account of the audible world into consideration but also an

ecological one, an inclusive audible world that considers the importance of not only physical vibratory motion but also fictive vibratory motion, which I explained in earlier chapters, and the possibilities for analysis within such an audible world. In the traditional sense, according to William Noble, “the usual approach to hearing in any standard psychological or audiological text . . . ‘begins with pictures of an ear and a description of how it works as a mechanism’”; such information “is followed by graphic presentation of simple acoustic properties of pure-tone sounds (‘periodicity’ and ‘amplitude,’ physical qualities that get translated into ‘pitch’ and ‘loudness’ as the corresponding psychological qualities)” (Noble qtd. in Noble 327). Noble also writes that in the traditional approach,

[t]he pictured ear is . . . considered in anatomical-functional terms and . . . shown that indeed it has the theoretical receptive capability to engage in an analysis of any sound in terms of the frequency-cum-amplitude tonal elements that go to make it up. As listeners we are not conscious of this analysis—such as when we listen to the sound of someone speaking—but at a physical-physiological level it is entirely plausible as the sort of activity that is taking place. . . . [What it means to hear] gets literally translated into this mechanical-biological model. . . . [T]he question of hearing is firmly based on acoustical/biological concepts that lead to the study of the capacities of the system in terms that are intelligible within the framework laid down by those concepts in the first place. (Noble 327-28)

What is at stake in the traditional approach, while such a model of the auditory system is not in its technical explanation error laden, as per Noble, “is the adequacy of this approach” (328).

Noble suggests that as defined and described, such a situation of hearing “is unrecognizable as an account of the audible world” (328). The audible world available in the present is dependent on how the perceiver hears and attends to the sounds, as Noble illustrates in his work:

[The audible world] consists, ongoingly, of intimate self-produced sounds—the smoothish, low-level and intermittent rubbing of my pen on the page, punctuated by the shushing noise of my hand and shirt-covered forearm as I move it periodically over the page to maintain the first process. The *sotto voce* verbalizations I produce as part-and-parcel of the task of composing the very words to describe the audible world. The small other scrape and squeak noises of my feet, my chair, as I move slightly while engaged in this writing. As

background, the sounds of footsteps augmenting and diminishing at various parts of the environment beyond my room; the minor explosions of doors being banged in motor cars, distant roarings of various sorts of vehicles travelling in various ways, the clicks and creaks of a building settling down at dusk, and the noises of people engaged in conversation, in making coffee, in searching for lost files, in loading up a slide projector carousel, in reading a newspaper. Now all of those variegated sounds have meaning, are identifiable and discriminable. No doubt an appeal could be made to say that these sounds are ultimately reducible to tonal components. But they are identified not on that basis, but rather on the basis of certain distinctive acoustical features and patterns. The physicist may be able to display my audible world on an oscilloscope and from that record, analyse the entire things into tonal components of varying amplitude. But that would be to produce a type of analysis that renders opaque the audible world as it is perceived. It is an analysis that lacks ecological significance. (328-29)

We see from Noble's account of his audible world that "it is largely through attention to dynamic features—distinctive temporal patterns—that we discriminate and identify one kind of audible object or event from another" (329). Such attention "when adopting an ecological conceptual framework" can offer complexity in analysis, and Wordsworth takes advantage of this kind of attention (Noble 329).

Such ecological accounts of the perceived world as heard are valuable for their depth and potentiality, but in actuality, not all active perceivers are able to hear and listen in the way Noble does, and Wordsworth seems also intuitively aware of this difference, as his work shows. Noble's "normally hearing, taken-for-granted audible world" allows for "ego-extension" and "affords the maintenance of self as an ongoing agent" in the world that reminds him "of the broader social/cultural system within which . . . [he] participates," reiterating that this "audible world . . . affords ways of social being in relation to others as well as the sheer fact of social being" (334). But, while some active perceivers explore the environment through an ecological model with attention to physical sound, others have powers, as Noble writes, "to move around, to handle things, to bring objects into full view, to sweep the horizon, to get close to a faint sound" in other ways, as instead of physically hearing the acoustic world, they perceptively attend to it



(330). Wordsworth seems keen on anticipating that some will not be able to hear auditory imagery, just as some with aphantasia cannot visualize/imagine. Therefore, it is important to situate sound as not only physical but also perceived or psychophysical. Likewise, it is important to think about the absence of visualization in those perceiving sound to consider how can something unvisualized can also be direct and audible. Peter Bell's experience showcases this importance as emphasized through my analysis. Noble suggests that hearing "is not necessarily an *action* that a person takes, but is rather more like the imposition of an audible object on one's attention" (332; emphasis original). Such perceptive attention can be the result of perceiver choice or due to differences in hearing ability, but the analysis of the features of the audible world heard and attended to are meaningful and complex all the same.

Through its paratexts, we can understand that the context of *Peter Bell*'s publication situates the work to be understood as sonic. *Peter Bell* for Wordsworth was another obsessively revised poem, marking the work itself as one created through inconsistent yet still penetrating replicating resonances. Jordan in his Cornell edition preface states that "Wordsworth worked over the poem so long that it has much of him in it" (ix). Jordan adds that "Wordsworth said that he intended *Peter Bell* for the *Lyrical Ballads*" (21). The composition of "Wordsworth's best-selling poem" began in 1798, and Wordsworth worked on the poem up until its first publication in 1819 and beyond, adding to and deleting parts of it for many editions (Jordan 17). With every revision, according to Jordan, Wordsworth gave the impression that the undertakings balanced and achieved "a variety, sometimes a combination, of motives," which ranged from pleasing himself to attempting to please others with his rewriting, single-word revisions, verbal changes, cancellations, and omitting and restoring of stanzas (18-22). The final revision seems to have been in 1836, when "Wordsworth undertook substantial revision of nearly all his poems" in

preparation “for the first collected edition to appear since the death of Coleridge” (Jordan 19). The consistency of unpredictability in the work’s textual history suggests that this text demands study in that sense, as if the work is ever present and evolving now just as it was for Wordsworth in its production.

The poem appeared in publication in its various forms over the course of almost forty years, but for this chapter, I have preferred in my examination the 1819 First Edition over the other MSS collected in the Cornell volume.<sup>40</sup> The first manuscript was “much-canceled and fragmentary” (Jordan 29). However, the initial edition, a most anticipated work, was composed from “the earliest possible full version of the poem”: copy produced “from MSS. 2 and 3, which are nearly contemporary fair copies” (Jordan 35). In the Cornell collection, “[f]acing the early reading text [“dating from 1799”], on the right-hand pages, is the text of the first edition of *Peter Bell*, 1819, with line numbers added” (Jordan 37, ix). This edition includes the dedication to Robert Southey, a motto with much import, in my view, but it does not bear the epigraph that appeared later, “a quotation from *Julius Caesar*: ‘What’s in a Name? Brutus will start a Spirit as soon as Caesar!’—an epigraph that . . . [Wordsworth] transferred to *Peter Bell* in the 1827 edition of his *Poetical Works* and thereafter” (Jordan 17).

The poem received much attention in parody and critique both before and after its appearance in print, and this attention only serves to illustrate not only the resonance the rumor

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<sup>40</sup> John E. Jordan notes that “*MS. 4 is the first to have a title page: Peter Bell / a Tale / in Verse / by / William Wordsworth at page foot is a note by D[orothy]W[ordsworth]: Grasmere Sunday  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 5 o clock / by the Gold watch, now hanging above / the fire—a rainy coldish day—Snow / on the ground—but there is a thrush / singing*” (227n). I find it interesting that D. Wordsworth situates the title using an ecological presence full of sound(s): the watch, fire, rain, snow, day, and song—all images that capture a variety of present sounds have been incorporated into the title page. For a more thorough history of the composition and revision of the text, as well as the reading texts, nuances of the transcriptions and other appended materials, see *Peter Bell by William Wordsworth*. Cornell UP, 1985.

of the work created but also the lasting reverberation created by its actual impact. Some of these “burlesques” were so well imitated in meter “that several contemporary reviewers of the group hostile to Wordsworth professed difficulty in determining which *Peter Bell* was truly the work of the Lake poet” (Marsh 267).<sup>41</sup> *Lyrical Ballads* would have been well known by this time, so Wordsworthian figures of the sort within *Peter Bell* would have been readily understood and quite possibly misunderstood by critics. Of course, others not so hostile found the work worthy of more praise and less ridicule. Indeed Coleridge thought it was ““Wordsworth’s most wonderful as well as admirable Poem”” (qtd. in Jordan 7). According to Jordan, in Coleridge’s notebook entry dated May 12, 1805, as he “had been making what he considered an ‘important’ observation about the physiological/psychological bases of illusions that may ‘occasion in the highest degree the Wraith,’” he cites *Peter Bell*, ““where he sees his own Figure,”” as an example of such (Jordan and Coleridge qtd. in Jordan 7). Coleridge believed the poem offered some kind of insight, and Henry Crabb Robinson thought so too, acknowledging it as ““one of the most delightful of Wordsworth’s tales: with infinite imagination, and a great deal of profound psychology interspersed with exquisite description, psychological and natural”” (qtd. in Gill 691n91).

In authorial commentary connected to the poem, Wordsworth offered his own remarks, explaining to Isabella Fenwick that the poem had roots in real circumstances and was ““Founded upon an anecdote”” he had ““read in a newspaper”” (qtd. in Jordan 3). He writes that he had read

‘of an ass being found hanging his head over a canal in a wretched posture. Upon examination a dead body was found in the water and proved to be the body of its master. The countenance, gait, and figure of Peter, were taken from a wild rover

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<sup>41</sup> For more on the parodies of *Peter Bell*, see George L. Marsh’s “The *Peter Bell* Parodies of 1819.” *Modern Philology*, vol. 40, no. 3, 1943, pp. 267-74. See also John Williams’s “Wordsworth, Shelley, and the Riddle of *Peter Bell*.” *Romanticism*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2017, pp. 75-87.

with whom I walked from Builth, on the river Wye, downwards nearly as far as the town of Hay. He told me strange stories. It has always been a pleasure to me through life to catch at every opportunity that has occurred in my rambles of becoming acquainted with this class of people. The number of Peter's wives was taken from the trespasses in this way of a lawless creature who lived in the county of Durham, and used to be attended by many women, sometimes not less than half a dozen, as disorderly as himself, and a story went in the country that he had been heard to say while they were quarrelling, "Why can't you be quiet? there's none so many of you". Benoni, or the child of sorrow, I knew when I was a schoolboy. His mother had been deserted by a gentleman in the neighbourhood, she herself being a gentlewoman by birth. The circumstances of her story were told me by my dear old Dame, Anne Tyson, who was her confidante. The lady died broken-hearted.—In the woods of Alfoxden I used to take great delight in noticing the habits, tricks, and physiognomy of asses; and I have no doubt that I was thus put upon writing the poem out of liking for the creature that is so often dreadfully abused. The crescent-moon, which makes such a figure in the prologue, assumed this character one evening while I was watching its beauty in front of Alfoxden House. I intended this poem for the volume before spoken of, but it was not published for more than 20 years afterwards.—The worship of the Methodists or Ranters is often heard during the stillness of the summer evening in the country with affecting accompaniments of rural beauty. In both the psalmody and the voice of the preacher there is, not unfrequently, much solemnity likely to impress the feelings of the rudest characters under favourable circumstances. [DC MS. 153, quoted in PW, II, 527]' (qtd. in Jordan 3-4)

This note discusses the many nuances of the poem's origins, origins blending tale-telling, actuality, hearing/listening, and the affective power of such. Many of these details are connected directly to Wordsworth.<sup>42</sup> Jasper Cragwall writes that after *The Excursion*, which did not sell

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<sup>42</sup> Wordsworth's enjoyment of Christian worship through hymn-singing in open-air Methodist meetings has been documented by Helen Boyles; Boyles acknowledges that he valued the eloquence "of voice timbre, words and music" that hymns involve (84). See *Romanticism and Methodism: The Problem of Religious Enthusiasm*. Routledge, 2016. Indeed, the poet is credited with five congregational songs of his own that still appear in hymnbooks. One hymn is titled "Blest Are the Moments, Doubly Blest" but is also known as "The Laborer's Noon-Day Hymn," which Wordsworth described to Isabel Fenwick as a hymn he wished to be sung outdoors in a "domestic concert" by "Cottage children carrying, in their baskets, dinner to their Fathers engaged in their daily labors in the fields and woods" (qtd. in Heinzelman 109). For more, see Kurt Heinzelman's "The Uneducated Imagination." *At the Limits of Romanticism: Essays in Cultural, Feminist, and Materialist Criticism*, edited by Mary A. Favret and Nicola J. Watson, Indiana UP, 1994, pp. 108-11.

well, and “given Wordsworth’s pains to ally with and celebrate the Church of England,” in his old age, “[a] fashionable narrative took hold: . . . Wordsworth had confused Methodistical cant for sound poetics” (101-2). He cites *Peter Bell* to confirm, arguing that because of his own religious allegiance, what he calls Wordsworth’s “prejudices,” the poet was unable to “read the earthy ballad as anything less than holy ‘*chaunt*,’ which worked ‘as a spell upon the hearer, and disarms the judgment’” [quoting from William Hazlitt’s account of his “First Acquaintance”] (Cragwell 102). Nevertheless, biographical considerations aside, I read this poem as not so much about Wordsworth but more about how language and formal narrative structure can leverage affective forces of sounds if we listen closely enough to them.

Examining the prologue establishes the work as sound art in this sense because while it emphasizes the embodied submission to not only poetic authority but also imagination, it also illustrates that the imagination has consequences and possibilities that are directly perceived. In the first few dialogic lines, we hear Wordsworth’s poet-narrator in conversation with a silent, imaginative audience about what cannot happen until a figure of his imagination, his “little Boat,” appears (4). He imagines such a figure into existence that quickly becomes directly perceived in order for the poet-narrator to continue with his conceit:

THERE’S something in a flying horse,  
And something in a huge balloon;  
But through the clouds I’ll never float  
Until I have a little Boat,  
Whose shape is like the crescent-moon.

And now I *have* a little Boat,  
In shape a very crescent-moon:—  
Fast through the clouds my Boat can sail;  
But if perchance your faith should fail,  
Look up—and you shall see me soon!

The woods, my Friends, are round you roaring,  
Rocking and roaring like a sea;

The noise of danger fills your ears,  
And ye have all a thousand fears  
Both for my little Boat and me! (1-15; emphasis original)

In this first section, Wordsworth at once establishes that his poet-narrator has full control over sounds and second sight, or imagination. Wordsworth provokes his audience to accept the sensory realities that he creates through this poet-narrator's imaginative exploits, which later take on a life of their own beyond the images only now called into existence. Images such as the boat also take on a sonic life of their own and eventually attempt to dominate the poet-narrator's imagination. An explosion of apparitions emerge as the sonic ecologies are tirelessly and unexpectedly created, encompassing a full range of various sound images, from aerial environments and flights of fancy to those contexts more grounded and earthbound. Through these remarkable ecologies, Wordsworth both challenges and empowers the audience to accept his range of sonic creations and thus multiple forms and definitions of nature, all contingent on both whether Wordsworth's poet-narrator creates them as Wordsworth composes the poem and whether his audience chooses to believe and accept them as well once he creates them. The audible feedback and communication loop begins in these twenty lines: Wordsworth creates the voice of the poet-narrator who creates the boat who inspires the faith of the silent textual audience who listens and hears the "woods" around them "roaring" and attends to the scene as "The noise of danger fills . . . [their] ears" all while Wordsworth's contemporary listeners as well as present-day readers process the sonic images from their present positions in nature, anticipating how the agent of the tale will proceed and processing the soundscape to survey the poetic intent to determine the impact of Wordsworth's aims (11-13). These sonic images are numerous, and the sounds they produce or call forth within the ecology create nonreferential sound art to accompany the written verse.

The dialogue between the poet-narrator and the boat about the potentiality of imagination and the actuality of the earth creates a conversation that accentuates two different kinds of nature. This emphasis placed on the differences between the two worlds further directs readerly attention to an argument about the possibilities of the mind and what might be gained from and lost to those possibilities when the intellectual life succumbs to the body's connection to community. The poet-narrator knows he is detached from the world below as he soars with the boat: he first is "content" (25) in being "among the winds" (23) and in diving "deep into the heavens" (24). He even remarks,

Away we go—and what care we  
For treasons, tumults, and for wars?  
We are as calm in our delight  
As in the crescent-moon so bright  
Among the scattered stars.

Up goes my Boat between the stars  
Through many a breathless field of light,  
Through many a long blue field of ether,  
Leaving ten thousand stars beneath her,  
Up goes my little Boat so bright! (26-35)

The imagination creates its own sort of reality, but in that creation, it "Leav[es] ten thousand stars" out of sight and mind (34). Likewise, experiences rooted in reality feed the imagination:

And see the town where I was born!  
Around those happy fields we span  
In boyish gambols—I was lost  
Where I have been, but on this coast  
I feel I am a man.

Never did fifty things at once  
Appear so lovely, never, never,—  
How tunefully the forests ring!  
To hear the earth's soft murmuring  
Thus could I hang for ever! (66-75)

Here we see the aforementioned “rivalship”—and also the combining forces—between an eternal faculty (i.e., Imagination) and a more temporal one (i.e., Fancy) (“Preface to *Poems* (1815)” 637). Wordsworth explains in the “Preface to *Poems* (1815)” that

Guided by one of my own primary consciousnesses, I have represented a commutation and transfer of internal feelings, co-operating with external accidents to plant, for immortality, images of sound and sight, in the celestial soil of the Imagination. (635)

While he writes here of “There was a Boy,” the sentiment still applies. Wordsworth’s attention to both potentiality and actuality in this tale implies that we as readers must take these different natures into consideration both physically and psychophysically. What does a potential acoustic ecology sound like? What might we hear in an actual acoustic ecology? How does the interplay of potential and actual sonic environments help us to know? These are some of the questions I believe Wordsworth’s narrative poem asks us to consider.

At the end of the prologue, Wordsworth sets up a constructed recitation that illustrates the listening and anticipating that occurs, mirroring the similar events that occur in the reality outside of the text. This is not to say that the world of the text is a reality but rather to suggest that Wordsworth draws attention to possibilities beyond his own poet-narrator’s imagination. As I see it, Wordsworth constructs the recitation, complete with audience interjections, to illustrate the sonic interaction that takes place within the dialogism of his creation. The doublevoicedness of his composition becomes evident as the prologue ends with the transition to the constructed recitation. This doublevoicedness shown signifies a similar sonic interaction that occurs in the acoustics of Wordsworth’s composition and recitation experiences, and in composing the work in this way, we are given access to such private and public sonic experiences that inhabit Wordsworth’s own world even if it is only a glimpse.



Understanding the work's oral performance history informs how the work might also be experienced today, as the constructed recitation within the work quite possibly mirrors the kind of recitation performance and experience that would have been enjoyed in Wordsworth's time and should be considered in our own. We have evidence in Dorothy Wordsworth's letters and the letters of Sara Hutchinson that the recitation of the work was recollected with nostalgia, as Dorothy remembered it in a letter to Lady Beaumont as "the happy evening we spent together at the reading of *Peter Bell*" (qtd. in Jordan 8). While this event is "not precisely datable," as per Jordan, "it could have occurred during the Wordsworths' visits with the Beaumonts at Coleorton, October 30-November 2, 1806, or June 3-10, 1807, or more probably when the Beaumonts were visiting at Grasmere, September 5-12, 1807" (8). Jordan gives us two possible locations for the recitation Dorothy recalls, Coleorton and Grasmere, both places with distinct soundscapes, circumstances, and audiences that would also affect an open performance, reading, and experience of the work. I have no doubt that some of Wordsworth's revisions of the work and his chosen narrative structure were affected by the events of the actual recitations. And Hazlitt had also already "heard Wordsworth read [the work] in 1798," another possible recitation that would have had its own affective moment (Jordan 9). The constructed recitation embedded in Wordsworth's formal structure likely paralleled the previous actual circumstances where Wordsworth had orally rendered the verse before living and breathing audiences. While such audiences are not my focus, the constructed recitation in *Peter Bell* prompts conjecture regarding the sonicity of the work in our own context and how we might close listen to Wordsworth today as audiences of his verse as sound art, ourselves hearing and listening from positions of present soundscapes and circumstances. I propose that the work's form creates auditors not only inside

the text but also outside of it, as it situates a perpetual recitation and need for performance from audiences contextually defined by idiosyncratic and distinct natures.

*Peter Bell*, and poetry more generally, creates sonic possibilities that are referential and nonreferential, and through the experiencing of the poem or the experience the poem concretizes and figurativizes—through its creation, recitation, participation, and perpetuation—these sonic possibilities supply variable resources for knowing. These experiences do not solely arise out of acoustic means, but for all intents and purposes of this chapter, I examine the kind of knowing that comes from poetry interpreted as sound art. In his work, Steven Feld examines what he calls “acoustemology,” which “conjoins ‘acoustics’ and ‘epistemology’ to theorize sound as a way of knowing”; this theorizing “inquires into what is knowable, and how it becomes known, through sounding and listening” and “asks how the physicality of sound is so instantly and forcefully present to experience and experiencers, to interpreters and interpretations” in order to understand “sonic sensation” as “experiential” (Novak and Sakakeeny 12). Feld’s work has informed my understanding of poetic sound and what we can know from poetic sonicity.

Even the title of the work implies the importance of its structure, sound, and genre: *Peter Bell, a Tale in Verse*. John Hollander argues that verse is a matter “of scheme and design,” and its “blueprints . . . can be used to build things made of literal, or nonpoetic material” (*Rhyme’s Reason* . . . 1). Wordsworth with this title is doing just that, scheming and designing to show his audience that Peter Bell as a character is certainly not what might be considered a traditional poetic being but still one whose story is worth listening to—he is a quintessential Wordsworthian poetic presence. Wordsworth establishes and maintains in his commentary while recalling the rambler that Peter Bell exists, as Hollander suggests, as one both “literal” and “nonpoetic” (*Rhyme’s Reason* . . . 1). Using the character’s name in the title is merely part of the scheme and

design in Wordsworth's attempt at poeticizing the literal "wild rover" he remembers (qtd. in Jordan 3-4). This title design works to highlight not only that Wordsworth is quite aware of his structure from the outset but also that the structure is linked to sound and to genre. I do not think it a stretch to acknowledge that *Peter* with the changing of the letter *P* to *M* connotes the word *Meter* and thus the first reference to the work's rhythmic significance, which the narrative's character's last name *Bell* reinforces through its denotation and connotations. The character's last name *Bell* also rhymes with *Tale*, drawing attention to the work's narrative aims. Tales, by generic definition, emphasize oral storytelling and "invite . . . experimentation":

Whereas the novel endeavors to develop the psychology of its characters and to create the illusion of realism, the tale emphasizes style and assembles rapid and implausible episodes. [Tales] seek to distance the reader from the narrative and to reinforce the necessity of interpretation and critique. (Seifert)

Hence, Wordsworth's title offers much of what I see as important in the work—the attention he pays to bringing a literal, nonpoetic being into poetic existence and worthiness and the emphasis he places on the psychological possibilities for that character through the preservation and recreation of orality and interpretation through style.

Wordsworth's figure of the ass in the text is another example of a literal, nonpoetic being transformed through the possibilities that Wordsworth creates in this narrative. Not without its literary and biblical predecessors, Wordsworth's ass, however, brings with it a seemingly more harrowing and human-centered context than, say, the ass belonging to Balaam from the Book of Numbers, a companion who has quite a supernatural role in helping Balaam obey the commands of God as the significant events detailing the Israelites' almost forty years of walking through the desert unfold through no independent authentically-engaged, sense of humanity, such as the shared sense that Wordsworth's iteration seems to possess (*The New English Bible* . . . , Num. 22-23). The allegorical significance remains, though, and we see Peter Bell's yoking with the ass

unfold very much like Balaam's connection to his supernatural ass, but the biblical allusion proves its function to be a more earth-bound one, revealing as it does the lack of will the biblical ass displays due to its total submission to God's authority and control for the sake of his will for the Israelites. Wordsworth's ass, however, exudes its own kind of authority that connects him to place and community more on the ground and less supernatural, which would be in accord with Jordan's opinion that "the poem was composed under a regime of modifying, not eschewing, the supernatural" (20). Therefore, while Wordsworth's ass may or may not be entangled in accomplishing the will of God, and while this allusion should not be ignored, as it opens up Wordsworth's text to other interpretations, it also should not solely define Wordsworth's poetic aims.<sup>43</sup>

Certainly, in this work, Wordsworth explores the ass's independent will to possess such a connection to humanity apart from a supernatural God. We know that Wordsworth emphasized in the 1819 dedication to Southey that

'The Poem of Peter Bell, as the Prologue will shew, was composed under a belief that the Imagination not only does not require for its exercise the intervention of supernatural agency, but that, though such agency be excluded, the faculty may be called forth as imperiously, and for kindred results of pleasure, by incidents, within the compass of poetic probability, in the humblest departments of daily life.' (qtd. in Jordan 41)

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<sup>43</sup> I note here that Wordsworth was reluctant "to identify with any formal system" of religion, especially in the late 1790s, at least as per Coleridge, who described Wordsworth at that point in time as half atheist (Boyles 80). See Boyles's *Romanticism and Methodism: The Problem of Religious Enthusiasm*. Routledge, 2016. William Ulmer argues, however, that Wordsworth during that time in his life "turns not from faith but from particular modes of faith," and he explains that Wordsworth was dissatisfied with "moralistic Evangelical rhetoric and emotionalism" and rejected "redemption through Christ"—at least until 1812, when, per Ulmer, "the poet's acceptance of Anglican orthodoxy was an accomplished fact" (17-18). See Ulmer's *The Christian Wordsworth, 1798-1805*. State U of New York P, 2001.

This statement, which has been interpreted in many different ways (Jordan 20), reinforces that despite the absence of the supernatural, Wordsworth's ass possesses what the biblical, speech-wielding ass lacks—in our imagination, at least—the independent will to have an intimate connection to and service of humanity and the communities that exist within those boundaries that are less than ideal but ever important. These connections become so intertwined and dependent on one another that the effects of such imaginative exploits possess the sense of some supernatural intervention, especially when that possibility is less of an option. Much like the asses found in biblical texts, though, Wordsworth's ass shows its “endurance,” its “ruddy color,” and its “wild and free” nature, but it does not exude the power of voice (Young 58). Wordsworth withholds the ass's speech but preserves the sense of its importance and worthiness, showcasing the ass's loyalty alongside its other virtues. While we know that Wordsworth seemingly chose to write about the ass because he ““used to take great delight in noticing the habits, tricks, and physiognomy of asses”” and was ““put upon writing the poem out of liking for the creature that is so often dreadfully abused”” (qtd. in Jordan 3-4), we can appreciate that the silence in the presence of the ass is noteworthy, especially when considered in juxtaposition to Balaam's ass.

That Wordsworth's ass remains silent removes obvious aspects of the supernatural from the poem's acoustic ecology and from the dialogic interaction between Peter and the ass. If the ass could talk, we might be more prone to read its presence as a supernatural force, but since it does not speak, we listen to what is available within the silence. This silence also forces us to see the relationships and environments created within Wordsworth's text beyond those Moses relates in Numbers, making Wordsworth's textual ecologies completely separate from the biblical ones though existing as just as literarily relevant. These contexts are as important dialogically and acoustically, however, and even more so because he separates the biblical asses from his own. In

so doing, Wordsworth carves out a space for a dialogic, sonic environment independent from other textual predecessors' acoustic ecologies. In such a space, he resides as creator to showcase not only relationships that possibly exist between obedient humanity and nature and an all-powerful divine creator but also the relationships that exist outside of those boundaries, which can be considered solely apart from any textually divine circumstances, such as those nature-human and human-human connections Wordsworth illustrates in his poetics and particularly within the sonic landscape of *Peter Bell*. I suggest that the work is less about the force of supernatural elements and most importantly about the impulses of one's imagination within these dialogically sonic moments, which Peter Bell's silent relationship with the ass reveals as we listen in to the voices that resound in ripples from the center of their association.

Wordsworth allows many voices to control the speech acts we hear in the sonic environment of the work, so Peter Bell and the ass have communities among themselves that become entangled with their shared system of discourse. According to Henry Home, Lord Kames, "of all external objects, rational beings, especially of our own species, have the most powerful influence in raising emotions and passions," and "speech is the most . . . powerful of all the means by which one human being can display itself to another" (1: 43). That the ass does not have an audible voice in Wordsworth's text emphasizes the discourse shared between humanity and Peter's privately encountered dialogisms on his redemption journey. The important influence of rational beings stirring emotions, that Lord Kames mentions, becomes more apparent when we listen to those speech acts. Wordsworth displaces his own poetic identity to give control to a poet-narrator not affiliated with the Wordsworthian narrative voice of some of his earlier lyrics and lyrical ballads in order to serve as a mediator between these communities and beyond to allow for the affective power of speech through his narrative mode, and in this displacement of

self, he draws attention to other powerful narrative voices and dialogic moments that have sonic import, showcasing the possibilities and complexities of acoustic aesthetics.

*Peter Bell* is a poem about communities at its core and how to reform these communities one person at a time. Simon White writes that per Wordsworth, “local identity was an ideal to be striven for and protected,” but he never clarified “what produced it” nor “what caused it to be eroded” (77). White acknowledges that he was indeed “a champion of the cottager and the smallholder, but he also wanted people to see the lives of such individuals for what they really were,” as not necessarily lives of “pastoral perfection” but “harsh” lives impacted by “social isolation” and political difficulties, where not being a part of “a properly functioning community” made existence troubled (77-8). The sonic environments allow us to hear how Peter Bell’s life has been impacted by his roving in the past, but we can also hear the impact of community on his future through this narrative.

Mapping the sonic settings that exist through the narrative structure of the work, we see that in connection to and beyond its formal structure—its dedication, (later epigraph), prologue, part first, part second, and part third—the work exists as a myriad of soundscapes, and Wordsworth moves between and across these patterns of organization and perceptual patterns to showcase each part of the structure as sound art. As readers begin to perceive themselves within the acoustic ecology created in the lines of the poem, the sonic environment of the poet-narrator’s audible world—and later Peter Bell’s audible world—becomes less of a textual space and more of an active soundscape. Noel Jackson writes about Wordsworth and his “claim for the sensuous vitality of imaginative narration,” noting that Lord Kames’s term “ideal presence” delineated “the active status of imaginative things in the mind” (85). Jackson explains that “ideal presence at once simulates and substitutes for physical sense-perception; this literary effect

reproduces the potent effects of sensation without sharing in the limitations that bind it to one body, thereby preventing its communication to others” (85-86). Wordsworth’s created acoustic ecology, considered through Kames’s ideal presence, would function as an environment wherein one could have “an embodied experience wholly independent of external stimuli” (Jackson 86). This account theorizes “the signature effect of powerful imaginative representation” and “render[s] . . . the sensuous presence of the past” (Jackson 86). Accepting Kames’s ideal presence at work in *Peter Bell* opens up the text to a fresh reading of poetic sound and allows for an understanding of Wordsworth’s poet-narrator’s acoustic ecology that reinforces embodiment and direct perception. As the text becomes reconsidered in these ways, I find that considerations of embodiment and direct perception become equally as intriguing for not only Wordsworth’s contemporary readers but also his audiences during recitations as well as today’s readers. The sonicity of the text taken on these terms becomes more than referential sound art, and the diverse natures or acoustic ecologies experienced differently by active perceivers, who might be traditional hearing or neurotypical actors or those actors who are hard of hearing, deaf, or neurodiverse, produce new nonreferential sound art that can be physically and psychophysically affective. Referential sounds, nonreferential sonic possibilities, and diverse natures abound.

Wordsworth’s poetry has sonic relevancy because it inspires democratic participation from other humans, a participation reinforced through the formal structure of *Peter Bell* that has already been illustrated through the previously mentioned burlesques, and Wordsworth hints at such participation in the dedication appearing at the beginning of the 1819 First Edition. In the dedication to Southey, we hear Wordsworth’s voice in communication with a close friend. Within this warm context, Wordsworth conveys a sense of intimacy as he provides information



regarding the work's textual history, his concern over its "favourable reception," both its short- and long-term effects, and his lasting reputation as an English poet:

‘The Tale of Peter Bell, which I now introduce to your notice, and to that of the Public, has, in its Manuscript state, nearly survived its *minority*; for it first saw the light in the summer of 1798. During this long interval, pains have been taken at different times to make the production less unworthy of a favourable reception; or, rather, to fit it for filling *permanently* a station, however humble, in the Literature of my Country. This has, indeed, been the aim of all my endeavours in Poetry, which, you know, have been sufficiently laborious to prove that I deem the Art not lightly to be approached; and that the attainment of excellence in it, may laudably be made the principal object of intellectual pursuit by any man, who, with reasonable consideration of circumstances, has faith in his own impulses.’ (qtd. in Jordan 41; emphasis original)

What stands out in this dedication is not Wordsworth's concern over his standing in the English canon but, rather, his veiled instruction on the "Art" of "Poetry" and the approach to such an art (qtd. in Jordan 41). I do not believe that Wordsworth took lightly the idea that "any man" could pursue poetry, and it is on the grounds of such an idea that my interests in his auditory scenes and the sonic possibilities within his canon stand, grounds for which a reconsideration of Wordsworth's "egotistical sublime" must be reconsidered. Through this idea, Wordsworth confirms the existence of others' roles in his poetry, and he releases any notion that his poetry is solely confined to what is on the page and from his own understanding; his poetry therefore creates a kind of audible feedback that perpetuates a communication loop. Thus, any participant in his poetry will be partly responsible in creating the poem, and Wordsworth's *Peter Bell* illustrates this possibility through its form.

As in the last chapter's consideration of *The Prelude* of 1805, Wordsworth's own definitions of the imagination can be useful in understanding such an audible world within and outside of *Peter Bell*. Recall, in Wordsworth's "Note to *The Thorn* (1800)," that Wordsworth defines imagination as "the faculty which produces impressive effects out of simple elements"

(593). This aspect of the imagination stems from an understanding of the imagination as “eternal” (“Preface to *Poems* (1815)” 636). The audible world created within the acoustic context of a poem (think here of Peter Bell’s epiphanic moment) and in the rereading or recitation of a poem in a new acoustic ecology urges the understanding of this faculty obviously, but it also insists on an acceptance of Wordsworth’s definition of “Fancy,” which, as I previously stated in the last chapter, is “the power by which pleasure and surprize are excited by sudden varieties of situation and by accumulated imagery” (“Note to *The Thorn* (1800)” 593). Both Imagination and Fancy are enacted through Peter Bell’s auditorily complex visionary moment of perception, in which we participate, as emotion is conveyed through Wordsworth’s words. We perceive the passion as delivered through the language while Peter Bell receives his sonic impressions. Peter Bell’s sonic impressions provide for us an audible moment where we hear the “Poetry” as “passion,” as Wordsworth acknowledged it was, and we take part in its manifestation as “the history or science of feelings” (“Note to *The Thorn* (1800)” 594). To Wordsworth, words are “things, active and efficient, which are of themselves part of the passion” (“Note to *The Thorn* (1800)” 594). With his words, Wordsworth affects both his mind and the minds of his audiences past and present because he supports the relationship between all of these natures. Edmund Burke writes that “Natural objects affect us, by the laws of that connexion [sic], which Providence has established between certain motions and configurations of bodies, and certain consequent feelings in our minds” (149). Essentially, Burke is writing about the relationship I envision, about embodiment, about natures and the human connection to natural objects, but the connection he makes to the emotion and the intellect here shows that nothing matters about relationship and embodiment if we cannot make meaning in that assembly. The assemblage matters, and we perform this meaning-making, because we are homo significans, using language,

and for Wordsworth, this understanding is clear; he values the effects that words have on humanity. Indeed, the words are “capable of being the representatives of these natural things, and by . . . [their] powers[,] they . . . [are] able to affect us often as strongly as the things they represent, and sometimes much more strongly” (Burke 161). Wordsworth uses words and the sounds of words as though they are catalysts of nature. They precipitate the reality of natures, triggering and quickening the events of nature as experienced.

My theory takes not only traditional accounts of the audible world into consideration but also ecological ones, inclusive audible worlds that consider not only physical vibratory motion but also fictive vibratory motion and the many possibilities for analysis within these environments, which perpetually replicate. The perpetual duplication of textual environments through actual sonic environments and acoustic ecologies connects Wordsworth’s works, and the poet himself, to notions of infinity, and I see this relationship through Wordsworth’s engagement with mathematician William Rowan Hamilton, an idea that could be developed through future scholarship.<sup>44</sup> The audible world available is dependent on how perceivers hear and attend to sounds, and when we adopt an ecological conceptual framework that understands the complexities of perception, hearing, and sonicity involved in attending, the result is complexity in analysis as well as possibilities in performance translation or recitation. Wordsworth takes advantage of this complexity and these possibilities in *Peter Bell*.

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<sup>44</sup> For a more detailed account of Wordsworth’s friendship with Hamilton and a reading of *The Prelude* that takes their exchange into consideration, see Thomas Owens’s “Wordsworth, William Rowan Hamilton and Science in *The Prelude*.” *The Wordsworth Circle*, vol. 42, no. 2, 2011, pp. 166-69. Daniel Brown also writes of the shared confidences between the poet and the mathematician in “William Rowan Hamilton and William Wordsworth: the Poetry of Science.” *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 51, no. 4, 2012, pp. 475-501.

## CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, I construct a poetic theory for not only composing and reciting but also reading and hearing William Wordsworth's poetry through what I term the Romantic ear. In Wordsworth's context, the faculty of hearing and the construal of sound advanced knowledge. For him, the ear was the organ that conveys into "the ear of the listener" those "sound[s] which the Poet feels" through words, which express "the full strength of the imagination involved in the word[s]," such as those Wordsworth discusses in the "Preface to *Poems* (1815)," whereby "the affections are called in" (631-32). In the Romantic period, the anatomical ear was a complex mechanism central to the nature of being, and hearing sound resulted in the creation of physiological, physical, and psychological realities, which I show in my research. The idea for this inquiry originated as patterns emerged across the soundscapes of Wordsworth's poetry where the ear and hearing and listening seemed inseparable from his formal approaches. These patterns and approaches incorporate direct implementations of the sonic and sustain such attention to sonicity today for Romantic-era texts.

My theory can be understood through other Romantic poets' works as well. One notable Romantic poem that illuminated and propelled my interest in Romantic acoustic aesthetics toward Wordsworth's canon is Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight," a conversation poem that includes sound figures both silent and sounded. This work reveals that phonetic relationships to emotion and imagination exist not only in terms of the work's conversation form

but also as Coleridge shows thought disruptions happening in turns from silence to sound through his verse paragraph breaks. The thought disruptions form a regular rhythm pattern with the “gentle breathings” (45) of the “Babe” (44) and serve a sonic function to entrain. They give the sense of Coleridge’s own attention to embodiment and rhythms and suggest possible environmental actual sounds, an acoustic ecology, that may have been experienced during Coleridge’s composition, acoustically or psychoacoustically, which may be physically heard or perceived today in various ways according to our perceptual differences. The soot “film” and its “flutter[ing] on the grate” (15) at the fire signify the dialectical workings of the mind in language, reifying the thought disruptions, drawing the attention to the kind of sounded moment this quiet poem represents as Coleridge listens and hears this

. . . companionable form,  
Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit  
By its own moods interprets, every where  
Echo or mirror seeking of itself,  
And makes a toy of Thought. (19-23)

Coleridge’s attention to sound and its effects on the body and the imagination are suggestive for the close relationship between sounds and thoughts apparent in Wordsworth’s understanding of how “language and the human mind act and re-act on each other” (“Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*” 596). For Wordsworth, “our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts” (“Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*” 598). These thoughts are transported through “that love of the sound which the Poet feels . . . and conveys . . . to the ear of the listener” (“Preface to *Poems* (1815)” 632). Wordsworth’s poetics theorize and his poems thus perform what this particular Coleridgean composition achieves, and in my work, I mine his poetic doctrine and poetry for new ways of thinking of Romantic poetry in order to theorize the Romantic ear and

what it could teach us about not only poetry and sound but also about hearing and listening to Wordsworth.

Wordsworth with his strategic use of sound lets us hear many voices in control of the speech acts as well as the acoustic ecologies of landscapes as he layers in sonic environments of the verse and highlights communities among the voices and acoustic ecologies that become entangled in shared systems of discourse. Thus, his speech acts and layered soundscapes offer interesting analyses for those who listen closely with their auditory imaginations. Wordsworth's poetry serves as a distant mediator between his poetry and the communities both within the verse and beyond it, or outside of the verse in the world of the reader, to allow for the affective power of sound. He draws attention to other powerful narrative voices and dialogic moments that have sonic import, showcasing the acoustic aesthetics in his poetry through the speech of the characters as well as of his audiences. *Peter Bell*, which I analyze in chapter four, is merely one example of his work that highlights this strategy, but I show that other poems illuminate my position.

Using Wordsworth's poetic doctrine and the period's ambiguous yet copious theorizations of hearing, in addition to modern-day conceptions of sound and perception, in the chapters I present, I choose cross-disciplinary and cross-methodological ways of thinking about how Wordsworth leverages the affective force of sound in his poetry. My unique critical contribution is the rediscovery of the possibilities for poetic sound in the Romantic ear through my analytical readings of "On the Power of Sound," "The Idiot Boy," *The Prelude* of 1805, and *Peter Bell, a Tale in Verse*. These works support the reading and hearing of poetic sound through the nature of embodiment and the imagination, and Wordsworth's composition practices uphold such an approach. I confirm through my analyses that each work in form and content

demonstrates Wordsworth as a poet strategically reliant upon the acoustic aesthetics in his work to affect his audience. While each separate chapter undertakes the examination of discrete strands and texts that together form my argument as a whole, *Resolution and Independence* exemplifies how my concerns for the Romantic ear coordinate, as an affective actual sonic encounter and circumstance that lends itself to the propagation of physical and psychophysical sounds of poetic creation, and I consider it an apt poem for reconciling my concerns for the Romantic ear.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *Resolution and Independence* was developed from Wordsworth's memory of an actual circumstance that Dorothy Wordsworth preserved in "The Grasmere Journals (1800-1803)":

*Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> October.* Very rainy all the morning. Little Sally learning to mark. Wm walked to Ambleside after dinner. I went with him part of the way—he talked much about the object of his Essay for the 2<sup>nd</sup> volume of LB. I returned expecting the Simpsons—they did not come. I should have met Wm but my teeth ached and it was showery and late—he returned after 10. Amos Cottle's death in the Morning Post. Wrote to S. Lowthian.

N.B. When Wm and I returned from accompanying Jones we met an old man almost double, he had on a coat thrown over his shoulders above his waistcoat and coat. Under this he carried a bundle and had an apron on and a night cap. His face was interesting. He had dark eyes and a long nose. John who afterwards met him at Wythburn took him for a Jew. He was of Scotch parents but had been born in the army. He had had a wife 'and a good woman and it pleased God to bless us with ten children'. All these were dead but one of whom he had not heard for many years, a sailor. His trade was to gather leeches, but now leeches are scarce and he had not strength for it. He lived by begging and was making his way to Carlisle where he should buy a few godly books to sell. He said leeches were very scarce partly owing to this dry season, but many years they have been scarce—he supposed it owing to their being much sought after, that they did not breed fast, and were of slow growth. Leeches were formerly 2/6 [per] 100; they are now 30/. He had been hurt in driving a cart, his leg broke his body driven over his skull fractured. He felt no pain till he recovered from his first insensibility. It was then late in the evening, when the light was just going away. (41-42)

Mary Moorman in her edition states in a footnote that the poem was originally titled "The Leech-Gatherer" prior to its publication in 1807 (42). For more, see *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, 2nd ed., edited by Mary Moorman, Oxford UP, 1971.

The work opens with sounds existing as present and simultaneously heard in the physical and psychophysical surround Wordsworth develops, but he segments the soundstream for his readers-listeners-performers to elicit their attention to circumambience. He establishes the sense of a layered acoustic ecology in this world through his use of sound figures, such as “roaring in the wind” (1) and the birdsong of “the stockdove” (5), “The jay” (6), and “the magpie” (6), all sounds that overlap. Wordsworth distinctly captures the birdsong in opposition from the “roaring . . . wind” (1), but he uses psychophysical descriptors to do so: insofar as the “stockdove broods” (5) more loudly than the sound of “his own sweet voice” (5), Wordsworth authorizes not only the existence but also the profundity of psychophysical sounds. Syntactically, however, Wordsworth ensconces the possibility of psychophysical sounds, as though to suggest the elusive or intangible nature of such sonic disturbances: “Over his own sweet voice the stockdove broods” (5). In establishing a full surround, inner and outer worlds replete with audibility, Wordsworth also enacts the sense of time, as the “roaring” seems to have previously happened “all night” (1) before the “now” (3) when “The birds are singing” (4). In fact, the interplay between the sounds that have passed and the sounds that still exist that the sound figures make audible produces effects as though no time has actually passed. Wordsworth’s first stanza thus preserves the simultaneity in processing the auditory scene that he delivers to readers-listeners-performers in segments.

Sound figures populate the stanzas, and the soundscapes captured through the form come alive through these words and the sounds to which the words refer. If we listen, we hear the previously established “rain” (2) that “fell in floods” (2) and hear it more significantly through its effects “on the moors” (10), as the “rain” (2) and “floods” (2) from stanza one carries the sonic weight in stanza two through the r and s consonant sounds:



All things that love the sun are out of doors,  
The sky rejoices in the morning's birth,  
The grass is bright with raindrops, on the moors  
The hare is running races in her mirth  
And with her feet she from the plashy earth  
Raises a mist which, glittering in the sun,  
Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run. (8-14)

Wordsworth sets up the contrast from rain to shine while retaining the sounds from the previous storm in the soundscape. This strategy reproduces a reversal of what came before, as the “hare” (11) “with her feet . . . from the plashy earth / Raises a mist” (12-13). The “noise of waters” from line 7 is further developed in this scene with the “hare” (11), and as she and the “mist” (13) abandon the soundscape, they leave behind the “plashy earth” (12) with its pools and puddles, which signal the splashing and misty sounds continually. The “mist” (13) as it “glitter[s] in the sun” (13) does “Run . . . with . . . [the hare] all the way, wherever she doth run” (14). The images disappear, but their effects are still with us in the sounds they are producing “wherever” (14) they have gone.

An interplay between the word sounds emphasizes comparative elements that redirect our attention from the natural physical soundscape Wordsworth captures in the first few stanzas to a mental, psychophysical one. We see this psychophysical soundscape most once the narration becomes more subjective, which Wordsworth reinforces through the subjective pronoun, “I” (15, 16, 17, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 36, 43, 54, 55, 57, 60, 61, 62, etc.). Wordsworth’s peripatetic, lyrical speaker signals the psychological shift from the physical one in stanza three, as he “*heard* the woods and distant waters roar, / *Or heard them not*, as happy as a boy” (17-18; emphasis added). These two lines reinforce that the speaker has control over his attention and listening: he can hear or hear “not” (18). By stanza four, the speaker fully transitions from his physical soundscape to his psychological one:

I heard the skylark singing in the sky,  
And I bethought me of the playful hare;  
Even such a happy child of earth am I,  
Even as these blissful creatures do I fare;  
Far from the world I walk, and from all care.  
But there may come another day to me—  
Solitude, pain of heart, distress, and poverty. (29-35)

The “skylark” (29) here seems not in the physical soundscape but in the speaker’s psychophysical one. That the skylark “utters a beautiful, trilling song high in the sky that may last for several minutes” and “mimics other birds” makes it a possible psychophysical sound that the speaker has produced in response to the birds mentioned in stanza one to drown out those of the actual sonic environment (“Eurasian Skylark”). Creating his own sounds, the speaker tunes out the previously described acoustic ecology to engage his own heavy inner dialogue.

Wordsworth’s syntax in lines 31 and 32 pushes this shift: “Even such a happy child of earth *am I*, / Even as these blissful creatures *do I* fare” (emphasis added). The adverb “Even” repeated at the beginning of these lines sonically produces the exasperation the speaker feels in this moment, as though he were mentally juxtaposing the natural sounds with his own simultaneously. The distance created in line 33, “Far from the world I walk, and from all care,” reinforces the speaker’s distance from one kind of soundscape to another. While the speaker reflects on “the playful hare” (30), his nature changes from one context to the next.

His thoughts become a kind of sound, a dialogic reminder not of the pleasant soundscape renewed from the storm the night before but of the transitory potential of his own joy.<sup>46</sup> The

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<sup>46</sup> Regarding the sixth stanza and the speaker’s disapproving questioning that leads to the unsettling reflection upon Chatterton and later on to his communication with the leech gatherer, Don H. Bialostosky writes that “the pragmatic situation of begging and giving alms becomes an occasion for the poet to produce a patriotic vision, ask a question, and hear the answer to that question saying something its answerer could never have anticipated or understood” (70). See “Wordsworth’s Dialogic Art” in *Wordsworth, Dialogics, and the Practice of Criticism*. Cambridge UP, 1992.

speaker recognizes his privilege in this imaginative moment and is moved beyond himself and present circumstances toward “fears and fancies” (27) that “thick upon . . . [him] came” (27). He considers the privilege of his healthy mind, his own faithfulness, God, others’ faithfulness, and Thomas Chatterton, whose “death” at 17 in 1770, “treated as suicide, had a powerful effect on the Romantic imagination” (“Chatterton, Thomas”). The sense here is that Wordsworth’s own speaker fears that he himself, at some point, could become a “skylark” (29) of sorts and mimic Chatterton both in his living and in his death. These fears are unstated, but the speaker communicates his insecurity and the relation of his voice to others’ who might draw conclusions about him through associations of Chatterton through his reflection:

I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous boy,  
The sleepless soul that perished in its pride;  
Of him who walked in glory and in joy  
Behind his plough upon the mountainside.  
By our own spirits are we deified;  
We poets in our youth begin in gladness,  
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness. (43-49)

In this stanza, calling on Chatterton and thus “an imaginary 15<sup>th</sup>-century Bristol monk, Thomas Rowley,” as well as Horace Walpole (“Chatterton, Thomas”) and other “spirits” (47) and “poets” (48), Wordsworth introduces other voices, “artistically organiz[ing] diverse social speech types and diverse languages—including poetic language—into a whole that sets the various languages against and puts them into communication with one another,” a strategy that Don H. Bialostosky states resembles “Bakhtin’s model”:

This orchestrated display of diverse languages creates a dialogue among socially specific ways of ‘conceptualizing the world in words’ . . . and represents them as they coexist with, supplement, contradict, or address one another in people’s consciousnesses. . . . When Wordsworth in 1815 writes that ‘the Narrator, however liberally his speaking agents be introduced, is himself the source from which every thing primarily flows’ . . . , he has put his finger on the distinguishing mark of Bakhtin’s novelistic genre as well, though he has not said how important

this mark is to his own poems or what implications it might have for reading them. (65-66)

The peripatetic motion of the rambling speaker—himself a sort of Wordsworthian *flâneur*—walking through the landscape, as he “was a traveller then upon the moor” (15), has led him through the active natural soundscape to a psychophysical one becoming more sonically populated as he continues to walk. The lines lead us slowly through the simultaneous soundscapes, whose auditory streams the speaker segments slowly: “When up and down my fancy thus was driven, / And I with these untoward thoughts had striven” (53-54). The “up and down” (53) of the speaker’s “fancy” (53) leads us to the anticipatory image Wordsworth delivers in the longer line, “The oldest man he seemed that ever wore grey hairs,” the image of yet another voice we should hear in the poem (56). Once Wordsworth’s speaker directs our attention toward the “oldest man” (56), the leech gatherer, the speaker’s voice takes on a less lyrical, more narrative tone. The generic soundscape thus signals yet another shift in the poem’s sonicity.

Formally, the work’s rhythm echoes Chaucer’s use of the rhyme royal for tale-telling, but Wordsworth’s syllabic adjustments throughout reinforce his sense of sonic nonconformity and an awareness of his own tendency to modulate his verse, suggestively emphasizing for his readers-listeners-performers the value in doing so in recitation. Chaucer used the stanza form first, and it is thus “known as the Chaucerian stanza” and the form specifically used in “some of the *Canterbury Tales*” (Baldick). In appropriating this Chaucerian form, however, Wordsworth in his metric rhythm echoes not just Chaucer and his tale genre but other poetic voices as well who applied the form in their works through the canon, as “it continued to be an important form of English verse in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, being used by Dunbar, Henryson, Spenser, and Shakespeare” (Baldick). Acknowledging Wordsworth’s attention to rhythmic echoes through his form, one’s auditory attention is at once aware of the historical sonicity of English rhythms

through other poets' use of them and Wordsworth's variations on such an established form. This attention to what Baldick defines as the "stanza form consisting of seven 5-stress lines (iambic pentameters) rhyming *ababbcc*" reinforces dialogic possibilities and the potential for other echoes within the work itself that exist, either referentially or nonreferentially (emphasis original). Once realized, Wordsworth's inventive approach to the form becomes set up for its juxtaposition with the stanza form in its original practice.

Wordsworth's cadential variation occurs a few times in almost every stanza, with some extrametrical lines including no more than one additional syllable, but the impact of his change is sensed most in the last lines of each stanza, where the extrametricality is most significantly heard. I realize the "discernible strain of idealism" that "runs through mid-Victorian prosody" that Jason David Hall surveys might affect the interpretation of the "metrical modulus" and therefore impact the understanding of meter as mental, "a decorporealized prosody founded upon an 'imaginary' ictus," but I emphasize yet again that it is not my intent to likewise "divorce prosody from the body and abstract it" ("Materializing Meter: Physiology, Psychology, Prosody" 179). The "complex interplay between metrical abstraction and embodiment" is apparent in Wordsworth's syllabic variations in my view (Hall, "Materializing Meter . . ." 180).

Wordsworth's attention to meter seems ahead of its time since such attention to "physiological poetics," only recently historicized, as Hall mentions, with its emphasis on "the 'vocal mechanism and the body'" gained momentum in "late-Victorian and turn-of-the-century prosody" ("Materializing Meter . . ." 180). The closing lines of every stanza range from twelve-fourteen syllables each, and through the extended syllabic intensity, Wordsworth graphically represents the falling intonation of pitch in the lines, which mimics his own thundering and embodied intonation.

Wordsworth in these longer lines draws attention to the semantic elements carefully positioned in these places. Semantically, the multimetric, irregular rhythms of these lines drop only after larger sections of isometric rhythms. If we consider again Jones's Dynamic Attending Theory, then we understand that the regularity of the equal beats in isometric rhythms entrains the reader-listener-performer to drive the attention toward the information that the multimetric rhythm patterns deliver in their unfolding. Wordsworth in these multimetric moments showcases concerns relevant to the common man. In the first multimetric rhythm pattern, we understand that the present state of nature includes sound: "And all the air is filled with pleasant noise of waters" (7). This line naturalizes the pervasiveness of the sounds of waters as a physical penetration in the poetic soundscape being thus created, sounds that also exist in Wordsworth's composition environment that he signals here for his reader-listener-performer to perceive, directly or indirectly, acoustically or psychoacoustically. Another line stands out that addresses the state of human nature: "And all the ways of men, so vain and melancholy" (21). This line, paired with line 35, "Solitude, pain of heart, distress, and poverty," projects outward what the speaker feels and creates a discursive space for an exchange of empathy. Daniel John DeWispelare writes that "language is capable of externalizing the internal contours of the hidden mind," and eighteenth century intellectuals believed that "language disclose[d] a person's unique mental 'form or likeness'" and "was an essential part of self-representation" (858). Wordsworth's use of language here suggests a shared sense of the contrast between natural sonic environments and the disquiet of the period created in "all" humanity, vacillations of "pleasant" (7) sounds and those internal sounds more oppressive. Line 21 in particular stresses the speaker's move from the subjective "I" in the previous lines to more objective concerns:

I was a traveller then upon the moor;  
I saw the hare that raced about with joy;

I heard the woods and distant waters roar,  
Or heard them not, as happy as a boy—  
The pleasant season did my heart employ.  
My old remembrances went from me wholly,  
And all the ways of men, so vain and melancholy. (15-21)

The longer line that closes this stanza reflects the intrusion of psychophysical sounds in the physical soundscape that was only moments before so pleasing. Wordsworth conveys dismal possibilities apparent in so many others' lives through his linguistic performance with the downward inflection. The pitch falls so much in the last few syllables of "melancholy" (21; emphasis added) that the rhyme is lost between the word's ending and the endings of the lines before it, "boy" (18), "employ" (19), and "wholly" (20), resulting in a rupturing effect on the lyric speaker to prepare us for the layering of voices Wordsworth has in mind for the rest of the poem. The extra syllables signal a rippling of downward inflection, creating a vibratory effect of sorts and drawing our attention toward the heteroglossic soundscape in voices Wordsworth has created that includes not only his own poetic voice but also those of his lyrical and narrative speaker and the leech gatherer, thus drawing our attention to the importance of utterance for this work.

The work's structure mimics the peripatetic action as the speaker negotiates the sounds of his internal and external soundscapes, and the motion continues, systematically, until the speaker meets the leech gatherer. His steady pace has directed his attention through its rhythmic patterns to entrain, guiding him toward the anticipatory image of the leech gatherer, which leaves him motionless. Wordsworth builds in stopping points in his speaker's thoughts here to place his readers-listeners-performers within the acoustic ecology he has been constructing thus far. Once the speaker "s[ees] a man before . . . [him] unawares— / The oldest man he seemed that ever

wore grey hairs” (55-56), Wordsworth moves on to new stanzas with calculated breaks between them to allow his readers-listeners-performers to visualize, join, and attend to the scene:

The oldest man he seemed that ever wore grey hairs.

My course I stopped as soon as I espied  
The old man in that naked wilderness;  
Close by a pond, upon the further side,  
He stood alone. A minute’s space I guess  
I watched him, he continuing motionless.  
To the pool’s further margin then I drew,  
He being all the while before me full in view.

As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie  
Couched on the bald top of an eminence,  
Wonder to all who do the same espy  
By what means it could thither come, and whence;  
So that it seems a thing endued with sense,  
Like a sea-beast crawled forth, which on a shelf  
Of rock or sand reposes, there to sun itself—

Such seemed this man, not all alive nor dead,  
Nor all asleep, in his extreme old age.  
His body was bent double feet and head  
Coming together in their pilgrimage,  
As if some dire constraint of pain, or rage  
Of sickness felt by him in times long past,  
A more than human weight upon his frame had cast. (56-77)

Pauses are strategically inserted for focusing auditory attention between lines 56 and 57, lines 63 and 64, and 70 and 71. While the white spaces account for the pauses graphically, arguably Wordsworth would have performed these breaks in recitation gesturally and audibly through his bodily motion and pitch, his kinesthetic and linguistic performances blending together to showcase the tale-telling speaker’s voice as he builds suspense in this moment and constructs the persona of the leech gatherer using a poetic term. The leech gatherer appears through an attention to “feet” (73): “His body was bent double *feet* and head / Coming together in their pilgrimage” (73-74; emphasis added). Likewise, in repeated sequences, Wordsworth’s speaker’s body in



motion “in . . . [his] pilgrimage” (74) brought forward this poetic construction. These lines suggest the relationship between origins and endings as well as embodiment and physical motion in the service of composing poetry affirmed by not only records of Wordsworth’s composition practices but also his poetry, as the Snowdon episode at the conclusion of *The Prelude* of 1805 poeticizes:

. . . With forehead bent  
Earthward, as if in opposition set  
Against an enemy, I panted up  
With eager pace, and no less eager thoughts. (13.29-32)

Wordsworth constructs an embodied situation for the leech gatherer here so that we hear beyond the speaker into Wordsworth’s *oeuvre* and potentially listen to Wordsworth himself.

That Wordsworth draws attention to the leech gatherer through these pauses signifies his importance in the already multilayered sonic environment to which his readers-listeners-performers have been attending through the speaker’s motion. The nature of hearing, with an understanding of perceptual difference, has been established thus far, as the speaker has captured a conceptually simultaneous soundscape in segments. The auditory stream, itself a simultaneous sonic multitude, with its physical and psychophysical soundscapes have been either “heard” (17) or “heard . . . not” (18) from our positions as the acoustic ecology has been described by the speaker navigating these circumambient scenes. We have therefore been listening according to our own nature to discern for ourselves a unique acoustic ecology, constructed of both physical and psychophysical sounds directly and indirectly perceived both in and beyond Wordsworth’s textual ecology of the surround, which includes the many audible and inaudible utterances embedded within his many constructed dialogisms, the leech gatherer’s utterance being one most notable.

Once the leech gatherer's persona has been introduced, the speaker's voice is inscripted into the text, and textual markers of dialogue announce the speaker's engagement of the leech gatherer and the leech gatherer's forthcoming utterance into the surround. We see the speaker address the leech gatherer initially with casual conversation with "This morning gives us promise of a glorious day" (91), a greeting that "the old man" (92) responds to with a "gentle answer" (92) not revealed in the text, and then again with a question and an immediate assumption: "What kind of work is that which you pursue? / This is a lonesome place for one like you" (95-96). The assumption about the "place" (96) being a "lonesome" (96) one for the leech gatherer reveals the speech markers showing the simultaneity of the exchange between the two. It is plausible that in dialogue, the speaker might have approached the leech gatherer through the question and then allowed time for him to reply before making such a supposition about the locale and its suitability for the visitor. That Wordsworth omits a new stanza for such a pause, as included for pauses previously, suggests the simultaneity of their dialogue. This sense of simultaneity is accentuated in earlier lines when the speaker's in motion followed by his stopping of motion, "My course I stopped" (57), and when the leech gatherer's stillness, "he continuing motionless" (61), occurs, creating a steady rhythm of movement and stillness in their discursive space that seems to both occur and recur at the same time:

And still as I drew near with gentle pace,  
Beside the little pond or moorish flood,  
Motionless as a cloud the old man stood  
That heareth not the loud winds when they call,  
And moveth altogether, if it move at all. (80-84)

The juxtaposition created in the lines conveying the speaker's "gentle pace" (80) and the "Motionless[ness]" (82) of "the old man" (82) increases the sense of simultaneity through the ambiguity of line 84, "And moveth altogether, if it move at all" (84), since it becomes more

difficult to determine what the line modifies, thus making it unclear what or who is or is not in motion in his turn.

The synchronous nature of the exchange unifies the voices in the text at once, and we suddenly move beyond the speaker's lyrical narration toward a Wordsworthian bardic voice, a voice that blends possibilities with impossibilities, uniting speaker, leech gatherer, and Wordsworth en masse. Mulholland writes of the dangers of this kind of "alignment of author and speaker," noting that it

permits readers of English poetry to confront foreign perspectives as if they were immediately available, that is, to confront them as if they were actually speaking as their own person, ultimately voicing themselves without the intervention of a narrator, translator, or traveler. This fictive immediacy, when applied to alternate voices, makes them powerfully persuasive and often dangerous acts of appropriation. (5)

Wordsworth, with his ensemble embedded in this text, is not innocent in this act of appropriation, as the leech gatherer is an alternate voice in the soundscape. However, such imitation was part and parcel of the ballad form, according to Claire Lamont, and central to Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* (1798):

The appeal of ballads to late-eighteenth-century readers was that, in contrast to the classical aspirations of Augustan culture, they represented a native tradition of poetry and gave voice to the common people. . . . [They] inspired imitation . . . . Wordsworth and Coleridge's . . . title revealed a revision of the concept of the ballad: traditionally ballads were narrative and only incidentally lyrical. Many of the poems in the collection were too autobiographical and reflective to be considered ballads, but . . . [some] reached back to the narrative subject-matter of the traditional ballad . . . [,] show[ing] the ballad's concern with ordinary human experience . . . . (414)

In service of revising the ballad, then, Wordsworth imitates the voices of humanity, thus giving them a voice through his poetry. He appropriates the voice of the leech gatherer, blending it with his speaker's narrative voice and his own bardic qualities, and the assemblage can be seen as one "conceal[ing] nonstandard linguistic qualities" (859), which DeWispelare argues "the discipline

of elocution” was guilty of doing; it was “framed as an educational regiment,” which “allow[ed] speakers to hide linguistic traits wrongly associated with ignorance, ill-breeding, and even criminality” (858). Wordsworth takes on the voices of common speakers and projects these voices into the acoustic ecologies of his poetry, ecologies that include his own voice.

The leech gatherer’s voice is a figurative representation of Wordsworth’s own in its acoustic manner of recitation, As described by the speaker, it is a bardic, inclusive, political voice:

He answered me with pleasure and surprise,  
And there was, while he spake, a fire about his eyes.

His words came feebly, from a feeble chest,  
Yet each in solemn order followed each,  
With something of a lofty utterance dressed,  
Choice word and measured phrase, above the reach  
Of ordinary men—a stately speech  
Such as grave livers do in Scotland use,  
Religious men, who give to God and man their dues.

He told me that he to this pond had come  
To gather leeches, being old and poor—  
Employment hazardous and wearisome!  
And he had many hardships to endure;  
From pond to pond he roamed, from moor to moor,  
Housing, with God’s good help, by choice or chance;  
And in this way he gained an honest maintenance. (97-112)

This excerpt includes not dialogue but markers that connect readers-listeners-performers to the leech gatherer’s utterance so that its audibility is imaginable and even palpable: “He answered me” (97); “His words came” (99); and “He told me that” (106). Before the speaker disseminates the leech gatherer’s utterance, he reveals the leech gatherer’s magisterial nature and establishes his own authority as trustworthy: “*He answered me*” (97; emphasis added). During recitation, Wordsworth himself was described in a similar manner, an account of which I include from Bewick in chapter two. That the speaker translates what was said in this manner reveals the

certainty for inarticulation, unsymbolized thought, and precategory sensory information likelihoods in the leech gatherer's speech, which Wordsworth himself also shared in his manner of recitation. We hear the created dialogism and understand the necessity of using the auditory imagination to hear the voice of the leech gatherer through the speaker's retelling of it in narrative form. The speaker's description here thus gives the sense of his own position as reader-listener-performer in the audience of the leech gatherer, who is also a peripatetic reciter in the Wordsworthian style. This passage illustrates how one might perform recitation in likewise manner. It perpetuates the sense of multiple voices existing in the poetic soundscape as a whole, both physically and psychophysically sounding out utterances within the surround, giving the sense of the need for aural as well as gestural performance in recitation.

Wordsworth empowers the language really spoken and pairs it with his own poetic voice, and the leech gatherer becomes a poet in his own way: "He *travelled*, stirring thus about *his feet* / The waters of the ponds" (129-30; emphasis added). Wordsworth curates the leech gatherer's process that resembles his own, and it is an act that requires balancing attention when physical and psychophysical sounds so pervade the discursive space that the layered sonic environments, while simultaneous, seem to compete for attention. Wordsworth communicates that the speaker's attention lingers behind, as "The old man still stood talking by my side" (113). The leech gatherer's voice, before it comes in clear, is "like a stream / Scarce heard" (114-15). The speaker cannot "divide" the leech gatherer's "word[s]" from each other (115). In fact, the speaker has been so caught up in his psychophysical soundscape that the physical sound coming from the leech gatherer seems surreal:

And the whole body of the man did seem  
Like one whom I had met with in a dream,  
Or like a man from some far region sent  
To give me human strength, and strong admonishment.

My former thoughts returned: the fear that kills,  
The hope that is unwilling to be fed,  
Cold, pain, and labour, and all fleshly ills,  
And mighty poets in their misery dead.  
And now, not knowing what the old man had said,  
My question eagerly did I renew,  
'How is it that you live, and what is it you do?' (116-26)

The speaker has to ask his initial question again not to get the attention of the leech gatherer but to direct his own attention back to the encounter and dialogue. Psychophysical sonic distraction is thus the force that drives the speaker's attention away from but also toward the affective force of the physical sounds of the leech gatherer's speech.

Wordsworth sounds the leech gatherer's speech in the acoustic ecology so that it continues to reverberate and be heard, much in the same way Dorothy Wordsworth did in her journal—as her entry from October 3, 1800, shows, she preserved that the actual leech gatherer had said he had 'a good woman and it pleased God to bless us with ten children' (42):

He with a smile did then his words repeat,  
And said that gathering leeches far and wide  
He travelled, stirring thus about his feet  
The waters of the ponds where they abide.  
*'Once I could meet with them on every side  
But they have dwindled long by slow decay;  
Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may.'*

While he was talking thus, the lonely place,  
The old man's shape and speech, all troubled me;  
In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace  
About the weary moors continually,  
Wandering about alone and silently.  
While I these thoughts within myself pursued,  
He, having made a pause, the same discourse renewed. (127-40; emphasis added)

This audible inscription does more than sound the speaker's performance of the leech gatherer's recitative voice each time "the same discourse [is] renewed" (140). It follows what seems a moment of confusion for the speaker and gives the sense of clarity to his dismal outlook, but the

transparency is not easily attained. The quoted speech of the leech gatherer is also suggestive of how Wordsworth himself might appreciate his work understood through contexts of discursive spaces familiar to his own recitation and composition contexts, spaces where he could “meet with” (131) readers-listeners-performers and “find them where . . . [he] may” (133), himself gathering his audience together as the leech gatherer collected his leeches, which were both painful and medicinal in the way that the speaker’s encounter on the moors has been. In its demonstration of the vacillations between moments of attention and distraction, the work also reveals much about readers-listeners-performers, their attending capabilities, their powers to make meaning when distracted, and their roles in recitations. It reveals much also about Wordsworth’s own “talking” (134), his “shape and speech” (135), his “pac[ing] / About . . . continually” (136-37), and his “Wandering about alone and silently” (138) to have his readers-listeners-performers follow “thoughts within” (139) themselves as they “the same discourse renew” (140) through engaging his poetry with their auditory imaginations.

Though I could continue to point out how my reading of *Resolution and Independence* illustrates the conceptual whole that I have developed through the overlapping ideas in each dissertation chapter, I instead express that there exists much more to consider that could be explored at a later time after further scholarship. For instance, the coordination between real and ideal presence exists, but the interrelation is too large a subject at present and deserves attention in the future. More treatment can be given to Wordsworth’s theories of fancy and Imagination in comparison to Coleridge’s Primary and Secondary Imagination. And more can be said regarding surround, utterance, soundscape, and distinguishable words. Implications based on the period and the relation between my work and Julia Carlson’s *Romantic Maps and Measures* needs more consideration as well as the implications based on the consequences for the kind of analysis of

the variability of recitations and auditory experiences I suggest. Theoretical considerations for performance translation still also need to be imagined, and questions for how and whether auditory translations shall be moderated, restrained, and regulated need to be asked and answered. Philip E. Lewis discusses the effects a translation has and how we might understand the process by which changing a text in translation produces consequences and has the potential for “abuse” (227). I intend to pursue these lines of inquiry in the future, as I articulate more clearly the boundaries for auditory and performance translations.

Exploring interdisciplinary methodologies and crossing boundaries keeps my scholarship in motion much like the Wordsworthian *flâneur*, and I realize the risk for border-crossing, but I intend to tackle longstanding hierarchical tensions that discourage such a diverse approach.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> I first arrived at thinking about sound in the Romantic ear through understanding the behaviors of one of my children. My youngest son Julian was diagnosed with autism about a year before I began my undergraduate English studies at the University of Montevallo in 2009. His doctor had told us that he was on the autism spectrum, highly functioning. Julian at that time in his life was both hypersensitive and hyperactive, and he was diagnosed as having not only autism spectrum disorder (ASD) but also attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and oppositional defiant disorder (ODD). He was already verbal at this point, and he was quite fond of producing sounds with his body as a way of communicating and self-stimulating. In the autism research community, these behaviors are respectively called stereotypic behaviors (i.e., self-stimulatory), which means actions are “repeated over and over with little variability in form, sometimes at high rates” that relate to the “level of stimulation or arousal” experienced by the individual in either an overstimulating or understimulating environment (Neisworth and Wolfe 206-07), and verbal behaviors, termed by B.F. Skinner as “any behavior (vocal, written, gestural, and other) that achieves its reinforcement through the mediation of another person’s behavior” (226). I never thought of his behaviors as problematic or as a result of “sensory issues,” but it is not lost on me how some choose to categorize such behaviors through the deficit model, as though these behaviors signify some impairment or weakness in the individual. While I of course recognize my potential for partiality here, I found Julian to be—and still find him—not only entertaining but also wildly brilliant, attentive, and imaginative, and any objective person who observes him or communicates with him would say the same. During this time, while I was beginning to understand these diagnoses and his behaviors, I was also in the process of my bachelor’s program, reading Romantic poets and Mikhail Bakhtin’s *The Dialogic Imagination*. It was then that I began to think consciously about the intersections of embodiment, composition, voice, sound, poetry, the imagination, Romantic synthesis, aesthetics, and novelistic discourse, specifically heteroglossia. I could not help but synthesize my personal life experiences with



Such approaches seem necessary for the continual renewal of discourse concerning Romantic-era poetry and for perpetuating the voices and consciousnesses Wordsworth captured in his work, his own voice and consciousness also included. These approaches let us reconsider, reimagine, and diversify the social contexts, past and present, in which Romantic-era poetry is highly valued and appreciated.

We learn to understand the value of these aesthetic encounters and how they can be not only preserved but also renewed in our contexts through our attention to how past technologies reshape or become reshaped through present technological capabilities. Adam J. Banks writes about the “repositioning” that composition theory and teaching are undergoing “that values cultural diversity and interrogates more deeply the social contexts in which writing occurs,” noting that in the field of composition, “more importance [has been placed] on multiliteracies

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Julian with what I was learning about literary studies and language, perception, sensation, aesthetics, and poetics, and this blended thinking brought me to and through the chapters I have presented.

During the fall of 2016, I became more confident in embracing the possibilities for cross-disciplinary and cross-methodological theories and practices as my experience related to the study of Romantic poetry. At this time, I was taking three courses in my graduate program at The University of Alabama: Emily Wittman’s academic writing course, Michelle Robinson’s composition theory course, and Stephen Tedeschi’s Romantic poetry course, “Wordsworth and Coleridge: Philosophy and Poetic Form.” I was also teaching two courses at The University of Alabama (English Composition II and English Literature II) in addition to teaching two sections of English Composition I at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. It was a busy time, and my coursework and teaching preparations were definitely bleeding together, which made for not only interesting ideas about the texts I was reading for each of my own classes but also how I was discussing the texts I was teaching in my literature class and the genres of writing I was teaching in each of the composition classes. I was reading seminal composition theories, such as Stephen M. North’s *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field*, Patricia Webb Boyd’s “Making Space in Composition Studies: Discursive Ecologies as Inquiry,” and Christine Farris’s “Literature and Composition Pedagogy,” and I was also engaged in Richard Bradford’s *Silence and Sound*, Simon Jarvis’s *Wordsworth’s Philosophic Song*, and the major works of both Wordsworth and Coleridge. I was additionally revising my first publication during this time and thinking about stylometry, linguistic styles and variations, and translation theories.

and multimedia writing” (10).<sup>48</sup> What might the possibilities be if, in the field of teaching literature, we placed such importance on multiliteracies and multimedia writing and how the two could come together to preserve Romantic recitation using digital platforms, applications, and designed electronic spaces that could allow for the immersive engagement with sound and/or performance, linguistic variation, and the voicing of print through the marking systems of the past? While Banks seeks to contextualize his work on race and multimedia rhetorical practices, his quote from Andrea Lunsford supports such innovative considerations for our field too, in my view:

To view writing as an active performance—that is as an act always involving the body and performance—enriches I. A. Richards’ notion of the ‘interanimation of words’: it is not only that individual words shift meaning given their context within a sentence, but also that words shift meaning given their embodied context and their physical location in the world. (qtd. in Banks 11)

While Banks clarifies that “digital writing and our immersion in multiple media forms and spaces demands a return to performance as an important area in writing instruction,” I argue that reimagining Romantic poetry through diverse performances is also an important area for the instruction of literature, and this area can be enhanced through a more explicit attention to the possibilities of digital humanities and our immersion in multiple media forms to aid in this instruction (11). I suggest that we interrogate and diversify Romantic recitation and the possibilities of Romantic sound by recreating those social contexts where reading-listening-

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<sup>48</sup> N. Katherine Hayles explores “what the print book can be in the digital age” in *Writing Machines* (9). Hayles suggests that “we can no longer afford to ignore the material basis of literary production” and stresses the importance of considering “how literature is changing under the impact of information technologies” (19). Hayles writes that the “print-centric view fails to account for all the other signifying components of electronic texts, including sound, animation, motion, video, kinesthetic involvement, and software functionality, among others” (20). For more, see Hayles, N. Katherine. *Writing Machines*. MIT P, 2002.

performing occurred in the Romantic period to reimagine those moments in new physical locations as well as electronic spaces. Such considerations encourage the understanding of Romantic recitation as possible through translation for a more culturally diverse exploration that multimedia and its options make possible in our technological moment. These reimagined social contexts and performances resituate notions of Romantic embodiment for further inquiry. These contexts are not only textual but also actual and electronic, not only recitative but also performative. And all of these contexts come together if we begin to theorize how multiliteracies and multimedia affect our own field both in terms of theory and practice.

Considering multimedia possibilities for Wordsworth's poetry is one way we might reimagine the social contexts of recitation as of late in juxtaposition to Romantic-era recitation. For instance, an audio version of the text might change or enhance the reading of sound figures, and Wordsworth's work, and all poetry in general, could be examined in this way. Sound figures have acoustic or psychoacoustic resonances, and the textual representations of linguistic utterances are sound figures much in the same way that Leonard Bernstein's universality of innate grammar relates to music. He suggests that there is an "inborn musical grammar" that corresponds to a "similar idea of a universal grammar underlying human speech" (Bernstein 7). Sound figures are in this sense linguistic and musical, and the multimedia possibilities for representing sound figures abound through remix, pastiche, sampling, and hybridity. Both language and music have metaphorical capability, and I hear sound figures as the fusion of linguistic and nonlinguistic sonic resonances in the service of metaphor in how they distract and force attention for both Wordsworth and on a larger scale through not only the textual and recited but also electronically-reproduced poetry. Hearing and listening to these linguistic and musical utterances ignites thought if an audience is listening closely and attentively. Adrian Curtin writes

about examining audio recordings of readings through the concept of close listening (270). He quotes from Charles Bernstein to suggest that “‘close listening . . . may contradict ‘readings’ of poems . . . based exclusively on the printed text . . . that ignore the poet’s own performances, the ‘total’ sound of the work, and the relation of sound to semantics”” (qtd. in Curtin 270). Curtin writes that audiotexts emphasize and reinforce the acoustics of the written text (271). Audiotexts provide “a dense semantic field of linguistic activity and sound shapes that re-stages the printed poem’s ostensible meanings” (Curtin 271). Listening to the dynamic sound registers of the discursive spaces in poetry and to how layered sonic environments are presented in such media would allow us to access audio representations of multiple consciousnesses these works reconceived through technology could bring together through their newly-imagined multimedia forms, which would certainly offer semantic and pre- and post-semantic enrichment worth curating in such a way. Such electronic aural stimuli could allow for the marking of poetry as technologically advanced and quite post-postmodern, too, insofar as it simultaneously represents communicative voices through messages it transmits through polyphonic figures unlike those that exist in the confines of print.

Wordsworth’s poetry already exists as hybrid and “multi discursive,” but through the innovative platforms we have access to today, it could become even more so (Karakoç 70). The “[h]ybrid genre embraces works of art which transgress genre boundaries by combining characteristic traits and elements of diverse literary and non-literary genres” (Karakoç 71). Wordsworth succeeds in showcasing such possibilities through diverse narrative and sonic elements through his literary and musical language and forms, as his works already move quite beyond these languages and forms into the realm of readerly reception and consciousness through the attention he draws to physical and psychophysical sounds through his poetic

utterances, which themselves house others' utterances. Bakhtin defines the hybrid genre as “the mixture, within a single concrete utterance, of two or more different linguistic consciousness[es], often widely separated in time and social space,” and nonlinguistic acoustic data cutting into language in the text performs this hybridity because it reveals Wordsworth's consciousness as a poet producing the consciousness of the text that the reader-listener-performer experiences through the works and perpetually renews through future recitations and/or auditory translations that may or may not be electronic (qtd. in Karakoç 71).

In considering Wordsworth's poetry this way, the performance of the poem and the reader-listener-performer become an assemblage of past and present, lyrical and narrative, literary and real, and thus Wordsworth and individual. If “collective life is constituted by a multiplicity of circulating entities that are mutually influencing each other and bending space as a consequence of their divergent activities,” as the “power of rhetorical actancy as a concept” suggests, according to Laurie E. Gries, then Wordsworth's poetry is a part of that collective, and his readers-listeners-performers are too (75). Both the poem, as technology, and the reader-listener-performer have agency and act in the world. In this sense, Wordsworth's poetry exists as “distributed cognition . . . dispersed across various, heterogeneous components of an assemblage or assemblages as well as space and time” in a collective that includes other nonhumans and humanity in their entirety—past, present, and future (Gries 68). Wordsworth's works as part of this collective do not compete to control humanity in the collective but exist as technology in the service of interacting with humanity and other technology. Bruno Latour reminds that we cannot master technology, and it cannot become a master over us (176-80). In this philosophy, he “advocates for understanding nonhumans as full-fledged actors in collectives” that we are a part of, and this line of thinking makes the argument for Wordsworth's poetry as hybrid texts in

conjunction with its readership—at any time, and it gives the work a certain kind of living power in a reader’s hands or on a reader-listener-performer’s tongue (Gries 73). I do not attempt to essentialize the poem or make idealistic assumptions about what it might do in the world. I merely believe that considering the sound of poetry in the Romantic ear in this way allows for further work to be done insofar as examining what this hybridity might have meant in the context of Wordsworth’s own historical and literary moment and how reading his work as an assemblage affects readings of his texts now and will affect them beyond the present. It might also serve as a beneficial lens through which we can read other Romantic work phonologically, phonetically, semantically, referentially, and nonreferentially.

My purpose with this project has been to draw attention to the power of sound in Romantic poetry and its analytical possibilities. Analyzing Romantic poetry with a focus on the important influence of sound stirring emotions means engaging with theories and practices of audition and recitation, and I include such engagement in my work. I theorize the value of hearing and listening to Wordsworth’s speech and nonspeech sounds, of considering Wordsworthian recitation and the motion and attention of such embodied acts, of navigating Wordsworth’s temporal positions and physical surroundings, and of his strategic engagement with the orality of the novel form to showcase the importance of diverse natures and democratic engagement with his poetry.

It is my pedagogical suggestion that scholars of Romanticism be taught to listen closely to the acoustic ecology of Wordsworth as embedded in their own, as in so doing, they will find that poetry exists as innumerable, layered soundscapes in and beyond textual spaces. If poetry is understood as sounded, it can be interacted with to understand how poets move readers between and across patterns of organization and perception to showcase many aspects of their works as

sound art. Wordsworth's poetics is at the core of my theory, but I propose the practice of my theory more broadly as a method for teaching Romanticism. I encourage a consideration of the possibilities of sound in Romantic poetry and what technologies past and present might offer in terms of reciting, analyzing, translating, remixing, performing, and preserving Romantic poetry in and for the future.

Understanding the value of speech acts and the importance of recitation begins with an introduction to the history of thinking about language that existed before the Romantics were composing and reciting. In my work, I include references to several seventeenth- and eighteenth-century linguistic theories and practices in England that were concerned with connections of speech to thought and affect that might help scholars understand more concretely the study of language as an affective object. The seventeenth-century treatises on the physicality of speech reinforce the importance of sound in making meaning, and they are useful for teaching a close engagement with Romantic poetry because they reveal linguistic inquiry as a site for knowledge making. Scholars of Romanticism need to engage more thoughtfully with the shorthand systems that were developed during this time if only to make connections to how these physical and visual representations of language help us to understand the kind of engagement with linguistic inquiry that had taken place pre-Romanticism. With such background, scholars will better understand that seventeenth-century linguists' interests in the materiality of language and its association with thought led to eighteenth-century interests in the rhetorical and affective possibilities associated with language and communication. An introduction to eighteenth-century articulatory phonetics reinforces the importance of the sonicity of language that alphabetic text might obscure for some readers as well as reify the attention to linguistic structures so important to not only Romantic recitation but also the auditory imaginations of today's readers.

As the auditory imagination functions differently for each reader, teaching historical attention to articulatory phonetics allows for more concrete yet diverse engagement with the sounds of printed texts, and scholars could produce their own creative renderings, or auditory translations, of the texts and record such pieces using notation systems created in the past for such purposes to participate in what Julia Carlson calls “the voicing of print” to “discover their measure” (*Romantic Marks and Measures* . . . 2). Scholars could devise their own systems much like Steele’s. I argue that we should be encouraging scholars to design similar methods of capturing poetic sounds, speech sounds, and soundscapes embedded in Romantic poetry. This “democratic access to . . . measures,” which Thelwall supported for blank verse at the time of *The Excursion*, according to Carlson, would teach scholars to initiate or participate in such preservation (*Romantic Marks and Measures* . . . 3). With today’s technological apparatuses, scholars could reinvent the process to create imaginative multimodal recordings and translations of Romantic texts, take elocution into consideration, and synthesize past recording technologies with those of the present. Contextualizing Romantic poetry using elocutionary history offers an innovative approach to understanding Romanticism more broadly, and it results in the scholars becoming more involved in not only understanding the language of the texts but also the rhetorical acts of the original recitations and future possible performance translations of such. Romantic poetry should be taught or examined through the lens of elocutionary theory as it relates to the sound of speech acts and their effects.

To consider Romantic poetry on these terms, adopting the term reader-listener-performer for scholars of Romanticism makes sense. Wordsworth was himself a reader-listener-performer, well known to have composed lines of verse orally while walking out in nature where public and/or private audiences were attentive and listening, leaving behind a clear methodology for his



living words to be conveyed by his readers-listeners-performers through an understanding of audition and the affective force of sound. Of course, I do not suggest that we teach scholars to become Wordsworth in their auditory translations, but I do suggest the importance of understanding Romantic poetry in terms of accepting the importance of the reader's subject position as they express the whole of the poem in auditory/performance translation. The subject position—the reader-listener-performer—must yield to the authority of the poet by leaving the integrity of the poem fully intact while incorporating what they have learned about articulatory phonetics into consideration.

Nevertheless, readers should balance self-perception of their sonic environments, both created and actual, and the acoustic ecologies created in the lines of Romantic poems. With this layered sense of perception, sonic environments of the poets' created audible worlds become less textual, more active soundscapes. Adding the representation and rendering of the past with the present renderings complicates the sonic landscape of the poetry, but accepting Kames's ideal presence at work along with scholars' auditory translations of the texts opens up the poetry to a fresh reading of poetic sound. Scholars can engage in the poetry independently, exploring imaginative methods available to them today. This exploration allows for an understanding of acoustic ecologies that reinforces embodiment and direct perception and allows for the unbinding of poetry from not only one body but also one imaginative representation. It lets scholars participate more creatively in poetry and thus participate more fully in the expressive utterance of the poem, letting them embody speech, thought, and feeling together through the words on their tongues. This embodiment allows them to experience Romantic poetry as an embodied force always agitating others through its utterance. The method gives them the awareness that

acoustic codes are not stable and vary from one attentive reader to the next and are subjective, but it teaches that such a reality should not negatively affect analytical import.

I seek material engagement with Romanticism and encourage fellow scholars to encounter the script of verse in ways that it might have been encountered during recitation using the body, using speech. I want the interaction not of text and silent reader but of reciting poet and audience, full of the distractions of the soundscape during the recitation and replete with those dialogisms that interlocutors bring with them to the event, the sounds they attend to, the ear worm they might have been listening to over and over again all week and the like. Such a soundscape is alive, and that auditory stream, which includes the interior sonic environment, is as important to the aesthetic event of the poem as the speaking voice of the poet in recitation. The power of the aesthetic event exists not only in the representation of the poem as textual and silent but also the physical and psychological sounds, voices, and codes both cultural and oratorical that exist in the precise moment of listening and hearing. Those actualities are interposed with the reception experience of the aesthetic moment the poem creates.

We should encourage scholars to envision the sonic environments of poems not as fixed interpretive territories but as interactive acoustic ecologies, which are inventive and freighted with interpretive possibilities, allowing them to experience their own circumambient versions of the ““world around”” or *Umwelt* (Chion and Steintrager 11). Sound and subject as entity. They could engage in the egocentric nature of audition, where sound might reach the subject categorially or precategorially to impress further upon their imaginations and produce a more complex aesthetic and somaesthetic experience of the poem. In this kind of audition experience, the auditory environment is not static; it is, conversely, always fluctuating, and scholars can either physically or perceptually attend to the sounds within their own experienced or created

acoustic ecologies along with those that the poem might call to mind and to ear or that the poem might suggest. In this encouragement, we teach scholars of Romanticism to recognize potential soundscapes in and beyond texts and to analyze auditory scenes that affect their reading of those the poet might have included or suggested. These experiences ensure scholars will understand auditory affect not only from perspectives of text/reader relationships but also of text/reader-listener-performer relationships that reinforce an experience of soundstream circumstances, which can manifest through physical embodiment, psychology, and cognition.

Having a better historical understanding of linguistic inquiry, auditory affect, and acoustic presences along with the sonic possibilities and soundstreams made possible by auditory translations encourages scholars to hear Romantic poetry with their auditory imaginations. Scholars will gain knowledge about auditory information transferred through oral recitations and understand that auditory translations generate possible acoustic presences that both pervade and enhance the reading and meaning-making experience. In my aim to have scholars use their auditory imaginations to reimagine Romantic recitation, I have two broader goals. First, I seek to inspire others to hear Romantic poetry with the auditory imagination the way it might have been heard in its recitation contexts by past audiences and to conceive the many possibilities associated with the authentic, ordinary acoustic ecologies of those sound events as much as possible. Second, I want to encourage scholars to capture sonic possibilities located within the acoustic ecologies of Romantic poetry using multimodal literacies and distinct natures that revitalize not only authentic engagement with poetry beyond textual confines but also embolden flexibility in sound perception through not only linguistic variation but also multimedia tools and applications. This capturing process, i.e., auditory translation, and how scholars choose to both listen and represent their engagement with the texts' audio need not solely be focused on

physical sound, as sound is not only physical but also psychophysical (i.e., perceived). Such consideration projects Wordsworthian recitation into present and future frameworks and engagements and diversifies the ways we talk about and teach poetry.

Wordsworth orally rendered his verse on several occasions before living audiences, and these recitations prompt conjecture regarding the sonicity of poetry in our context and how we might close listen today as audiences of Romantic poetry as sound art, ourselves reciting, hearing, and listening from positions of present soundscapes and circumstances. Poetry creates auditors not only inside text but also outside of it, as it situates perpetual recitation and the need for performance/auditory translations from audiences contextually defined by idiosyncratic and distinct natures. Poetry creates sonic possibilities both referential and nonreferential, and through the experiencing of the poem or the experience the poem concretizes and figurativizes—through its creation, recitation, participation, and perpetuation—these sonic possibilities supply variable resources for knowing. These experiences do not solely arise out of acoustic means, but we should teach scholars to examine the kind of knowing that comes from poetry interpreted as sound art. Steven Feld examines what he calls “acoustemology,” which “conjoins ‘acoustics’ and ‘epistemology’ to theorize sound as a way of knowing”; this theorizing “inquires into what is knowable, and how it becomes known, through sounding and listening” and “asks how the physicality of sound is so instantly and forcefully present to experience and experiencers, to interpreters and interpretations” in order to understand “sonic sensation” as “experiential” (qtd. in Novak and Sakakeeny 12). Feld’s work can inform our understanding of poetic sound and what we can know from poetic sonicity. Realizing sound possibilities by analyzing poetry as audio reshapes our theoretical understanding of poets and poetics and reinforces poetry as a modern somaesthetic-affective object. This engagement appreciates and reimagines Romantic-

era recitation as a valuable method for engaging with the poetry of the period. If we conceptualize recitation and literary sound in this way, we provide scholars with unlimited possibilities for encountering poetic acoustic ecologies as three-dimensional and interactive.

The diverse study of sound presents uncountable opportunities for scholars of Romanticism. Technologies of the past and the present offer ample methods for experimenting with Romantic texts and auditory translations in terms of reciting, analyzing, translating, remixing, performing, and preserving Romantic poetry in and for the future. Sound studies using not only the linguistic treatises and recording methodologies of the past but also present-day digital tools provide us with the means to further experience and preserve literature. We should present scholars with the opportunity to not only experience these memorable works using their own tongues and in new mediums but also analyze them as originals and translations and therefore synthesize the imaginative renderings of the Romantic period with our present imaginative possibilities and technological capabilities. In theory, I envision the critical advantages of blending multimodal digital writing and performance to develop immersive and interactive sonic environments of electronic literature that simultaneously preserve and reconceptualize how literature is read, heard, performed, and translated, where readers-listeners-performers can experiment with the affective force of sound as they perceive its function, modernize expressions of the materiality of language and its association with thought, and curate diverse renderings, compositions, and analyses under the direction of poets.

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