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SCOTT HESS

Wordsworth's Epitaphic Poetics and the Print Market

BETWEEN ROUGHLY 1797, WHEN HE BEGAN WORK ON THE *RUINED COTtage* manuscript, and 1814, when he published *The Excursion,* William Wordsworth returned again and again to the poetic form of the epitaph. Critics in recent decades have tended to read these epitaphic poems either deconstructively, as a general trope for the textuality of writing and its inevitable gap of absence and loss; or as creating an imagined form of community, through shared sympathy with the deceased. This essay will build on those insights but suggest a more historically specific reading of Wordsworth's epitaphic mode: his use of the epitaph in order to develop, theorize, and justify a new poetics and a new authorial role in relation to an expanding print culture.

Deconstructive readings generally emphasize the gap between the sheer materiality of the inscribed epitaph, figuring the textuality of writing, and the absence of the author, associated with the absent dead. In the epitaph, according to such readings, the living play of experience and identity is arrested onto the fixed lineaments of the material page, creating a haunted gap between signifier and signified, text and the human presence to which it refers. Frances Ferguson, Paul de Man, J. Douglas Kneale, and Mary Jacobus all connect the epitaphic mode in this way with the project of autobiography generally: what Kneale calls "Wordsworth's master trope, the epitaph, in which the (absent) autobiographical self attempts to give itself textual form" but can never fully incarnate itself within the text.[1]

Other critics, including Esther Schor, Michele Turner Sharp, Lorna Clymer, and Kurt Fosso, have recently shown how Wordsworth uses death and the epitaph to bind together an imagined community of readers.[2] In

1. Douglas Kneale, *Monumental Writing: Aspects of Rhetoric in Wordsworth's Writing* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), xviii. See also Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), esp. chap. 4; Frances Ferguson, *Wordsworth: Language as Counter-Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); and Mary Jacobus, *Romanticism, Writing, and Sexual Difference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), esp. chaps. 1 and 10.

2. Kurt Fosso, *Buried Communities: Wordsworth and the Bonds of Mourning* (Albany: State

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Buried Communities, Fosso writes that Wordsworth's poetry of mourning leads to a memorialization that "forges a bond of grief between mourners and between the living and the dead."[3] According to Fosso, "it is not community that leads to a connection to the dead so much as it is the dead, and more specifically the relationship of the living to them, that leads to community" (ibid.).

While both these critical approaches have produced valuable insights, neither has attended specifically enough to the historical, cultural, and material contexts of the period. Deconstructive readers tend to universalize the relationship between language and death in an ahistorical manner. Accounts of imagined community, on the other hand, have not sufficiently historicized author-reader relations and remain vague on why a poet might imagine this particular form of community at this particular time. Fosso, for instance, claims that Wordsworth's "social vision of mournful community is his particular response to a broad crisis in late eighteenth-century Britain," specifically its transformation from a predominantly agrarian to a more urbanized society, with a corresponding loss of more intimate and immediate forms of community (xi, 14–15). Writers at the time, however, faced a more specific and pressing sense of dislocation: the vast expansion of the reading public and the lost sense of immediate connection between authors and readers. In his study of *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period,* William St. Clair claims that this massive expansion took place after court decisions in the 1770s opened up a common domain of literary works for republication, after the lapse of a twenty-eight year copyright term. This development broke up a long period of monopoly and price-fixing by booksellers and led to a "rapid expansion of reading . . . across all strata of society, whether categorized by income, by occupation, or by gender."[4] St. Clair's analysis confirms that of Jon Klancher, who argues in *The Making of English Reading Audiences* that the reading public greatly expanded and fractured during the Romantic period, forcing authors to face a vast and anonymous commercial public for the first time without the previous sense of a "deliberately formed compact between writer and audi-

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University of New York Press, 2004); Michele Turner Sharp, "The Churchyard Among the Wordsworthian Mountains: Mapping the Common Ground of Death and the Reconfiguration of Romantic Community," *ELH* 62, no. 2 (1995): 387–407; Esther Schor, *Bearing the Dead: The British Culture of Mourning from the Enlightenment to Victoria* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); and Lorna Clymer, "Graved in Tropes: The Figural Logic of Epitaphs and Elegies in Blair, Gray, Cowper, Wordsworth," *ELH* 62, no. 2 (1995): 347–87.

3. Fosso, 7.

4. William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 11.

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ence."[5] Wordsworth's use of the epitaph responded to these specific conditions, both representing the sense of separation between author and public and symbolically compensating for that separation.

This relationship between the epitaph and print market conditions appears most obviously in Wordsworth's repeated use of the *Siste Viator,* a Classical trope in which an epitaph begins by calling out to the individual "Traveller" or "Stranger" to "stop and read" (hence *Siste Viator,* or "stop, traveler"). Wordsworth discusses this trope in detail in his 1810 "Essays upon Epitaphs" and it informs much of his epitaphic poetry, as Geoffrey Hartman points out in "Wordsworth, Inscriptions, and Romantic Nature Poetry."[6] By singling out the unknown individual reader in this way, the *Siste Viator* address specifically invokes the act of solitary reading. At the same time, through its appeal to an imagined "stranger" with whom the author has no immediate personal contact, it gestures to an unknown public, figured as a collection of isolated individual readers, or "travelers," disconnected from specifically located communities or places.

Joshua Scodel claims in *The English Poetic Epitaph* that this address to the unknown "Stranger," often coupled with the term "friend," emerged as a characteristic epitaphic mode around the middle of the eighteenth century.[7] According to Scodel, "the long description of the ideal reader" in many such epitaphs, together with "the emphasis upon the uncertainty of his or her appearance" and response, begins in English epitaphs in the 1740s and extends through about 1820 (328). At the same time, towards the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, a flood of epitaphs began to appear in commercial magazines such as the *Gentleman's Magazine* and the *European Magazine,* often signed "Viator" or "Traveller."[8] This form of address, Scodel argues, responded to the expansion of the general public, which made authors increasingly anxious to find or imagine "proper" sympathetic readers. By directly addressing the "stranger," the epi-

5. Jon Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790–1832* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 172.

6. Classical tombs were traditionally located along the roads leading out of towns, hence the address to the "traveler" to stop and read. For Wordsworth's discussion of this trope, see *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth,* ed. W. J. B. Owen and J. W. Smyser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 2:54. Subsequent citations of Wordsworth's prose writing are by volume and page number from this edition. Geoffrey Hartman, "Wordsworth, Inscriptions, and Romantic Nature Poetry," in *From Sensibility to Romanticism,* ed. Frederick W. Hill and Harold Bloom (New York: Humanities Press, 1982), 389–413.

7. Joshua Scodel, *The English Poetic Epitaph: Commemoration and Conflict from Johnson to Wordsworth* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

8. On this development, see Ernest Bernhardt-Kabisch, "The Epitaph and the Romantic Poets: a Survey," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (1967): 141.

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taph in this mode could speak to the unknown reader, thus writing the terms of reception into its own dramatic scenario.

Faced with this increasingly large, heterogeneous, and fragmented public, including a wider assortment of readers from more social classes, poets during the Romantic era began to use similar strategies in order to construct their own poetic roles and audiences, often writing the processes of reception into their own texts.[9] These poets confronted an increasing sense of authorial isolation, together with a corresponding crisis of poetic authority and identity, that was intensified by political divisions after the French Revolution. The ongoing commercialization of writing, which threatened to turn literature into just another form of commodity, further exacerbated these pressures.

Wordsworth's use of the epitaph and its trope of the *Siste Viator* responded directly to this situation, both registering the tensions of print culture and allowing him to control and defuse those tensions in symbolic form. The *Siste Viator* address occurs in various forms in a large number of Wordsworth's epitaphic poems. Two epitaphic poems that Wordsworth translated from the Italian writer Chiabrera in 1809 begin with this trope explicitly, as do many of his inscription poems over an extended period: "Inscription for a Seat by the Pathway Side Ascending to Windy Brow" (composed 1794), "Inscription for a Seat by a Roadside, Half Way up a Steep Hill, Facing the South" (composed 1796–97), "Written with a Slate Pencil Upon a Stone . . . Upon One of the Islands at Rydal" (1800), "Written with a Pencil Upon a Stone in the Wall of the House (an Outhouse), On the Island at Grasmere" (1800), "Written with a Slate Pencil on a Stone, on the Side of the Mountain of Black Comb" (1815), and "Inscribed Upon a Rock" (1820).[10] All these poems begin with a direct address to an unknown individual reader to stop and contemplate an imagined landscape, and all of them set out to instruct that reader in ways that seek to dictate the terms of the poem's reception. Other epitaphic poems use variations on the *Siste Viator* trope. *Michael* and *The Ruined Cottage* place the reader at an epitaphic site associated with the deceased main character, halt-

9. For some versions of how poets responded to this new mass public and wrote the processes of reception and audience formation into their texts, see Klancher, *Making of English Reading Audiences;* Charles Rzepka, *The Self as Mind: Vision and Identity in Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Keats* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986); and Lucy Newlyn, *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism: the Anxieties of Reception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). For a broad account of this new situation that poets faced and how they responded with changing forms of self-representations, see also my book, *Authoring the Self: Print Culture, Poetry, and Self-Representation from Pope Through Wordsworth* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

10. For the two Chiabera translations, see *William Wordsworth: the Poems,* ed. John O. Hayden (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977) 1:831, 833.

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ing us there for a protracted rehearsal of their tale in a kind of extended epitaph. "The Solitary Reaper" begins with a direct address to the unknown reader, in *Siste Viator* fashion, to stop and contemplate the reaper: "Behold her . . . / Stop here, or gently pass!"[11] While the reaper is working, and therefore not literally dead, the poem is suffused by an elegiac tone and a sense of uncrossable distance between narrator and reaper that suggests a variation on the epitaphic mode. In these and other poems, such as "A Poet's Epitaph," "There Was a Boy," "The Brothers," and "Lines Written on a Tablet in a School," death becomes associated with a specific epitaphic site, with the scenario of the individual reader halted for poetic instruction and sympathetic identification with the dead. Such sites, set apart from ordinary social space and relationships, isolate reading and writing in a distinct discursive sphere analogous to that of print market culture.

The epitaphic form had many advantages for Wordsworth's poetics. As a traditional form used for people of all social classes, the epitaph allowed Wordsworth to evade "poetic diction" and address his public in plain language as a collection of solitary readers, regardless of specific social class or identity. Use of the epitaph also justified Wordsworth in writing about laboring-class subjects and imbued his poetry with a sense of moral authority. By invoking sympathy for the deceased in the memorial space of the churchyard, the epitaph could bring this diverse audience together in a shared act of sympathetic identification in order to create a coherent national community of readers from all social classes—exactly the role Wordsworth hoped for his own poetry.

Wordsworth's 1810 "Essays upon Epitaphs," among his most significant theoretical explorations of his poetics, center on precisely this role for the epitaph.[12] In his second "Essay," for instance, Wordsworth claims that

> an epitaph is not a proud writing shut up for the studious: it is exposed to all—to the wise and the most ignorant; it is condescending, perspicuous, and lovingly solicits regard; its story and admonitions are brief, that the thoughtless, the busy, and indolent, may not be deterred, nor the impatient tired: the stooping old man cons the engraven record like a second horn-book;—the child is proud that he can read it;—and the stranger is introduced through its mediation to the company of a friend: it is concerning all, and for all:—in the church-yard it is open to the day; the sun looks down upon the stone, and the rains of heaven beat against it. (*Prose* 2:59)

11. Quoted from *Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems, 1800–1807,* ed. Jared Curtis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), lines 1, 4.

12. For a general discussion of the poetics of the "Essays Upon Epitaphs," see W. J. B. Owen, *Wordsworth as Critic* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), chap. 6.

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In the third "Essay," he similarly calls the epitaph

> a shrine to which the fancies of a scattered family may repair in pilgrimage; the thoughts of the individuals, without any communication with each other, must oftentimes meet here.—Such a frail memorial then is not without its tendencies to keep families together; it feeds also local attachment, which is the tap-root of the tree of Patriotism. (*Prose* 2:93)

Just as a circulated text can create an "imagined community" among widely dispersed readers, so epitaphs on this model can bring people together in mutual identification despite their lack of direct contact or communication with one another. Paradoxically, Wordsworth associates epitaphs here both with solitary silent reading and with community: both with the detached individual traveler and with "local attachment" and "Patriotism." Epitaphs introduce even the "stranger" as if to the "company of a friend," creating a social bond between people who have never directly met one another. Using a phrase that echoes Edmund Burke's definition of an organic British society and could just as easily describe the role of literature in constituting that society, Wordsworth elsewhere writes that "a parish-church, in the stillness of the country, is a visible centre of a community of the living and the dead; a point to which are habitually referred the nearest concerns of both" (*Prose* 2:56). In providing this center of communal identification, as Lucy Newlyn argues in *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism,* the trope of the epitaph transforms Wordsworth's "fear of exposure to public scrutiny into a trust that the act of reception will be as harmless as the gaze of a stooping old man or a child learning to read."[13] In this way the epitaph, like the work of literature in the print market, both addresses its readers as distinct individuals and becomes the imaginative site for their common social identification with one another.

The appeal to "Patriotism" identifies this sympathetic or discursive community specifically with the nation and with English nationalism. Wordsworth further stresses this association in his second and third "Essays upon Epitaphs," where he opposes the authenticity and sincerity of English epitaphs against the false cleverness of the French. Wordsworth's epitaphs evoke the specifically English virtue of sincerity against both French culture and the neo-Classical poetics of eighteenth-century English writers—especially Alexander Pope, whose epitaphs he singles out for sustained vituperation (*Prose* 2:70, 73, 75–77, 80, 82).[14] These nationalist associations take

13. Newlyn, 125.

14. On English nationalism and its self-definition through sincerity, in opposition to France and French Enlightenment culture, see Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), esp. 117–18, 127–28.

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on a high moral purpose, as he rails against the perversion of epitaphic poetics leading to the corruption of "our Countrymen" and the "morals" and "judgement of the Nation" (*Prose* 2:72–73, 75, 84–85). Wordsworth's use of the epitaph, which he associates specifically with country churchyards, also invokes the general eighteenth-century craze for British antiquities, which led to a huge increase in epitaphic writing and scholarship from about 1750 through 1820.[15] The identity of the "stranger" in Wordsworth's *Siste Viator* mode is never explicitly defined, but is most likely a domestic traveler—part of the growing wave of tourists who patriotically set out to explore Great Britain during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and who made churchyards and other Gothic sites, together with the landscape itself, a central part of their itinerary.[16] Wordsworth tends to set his epitaphic poems in recognizably English landscapes and churchyards, associated with the eighteenth-century graveyard poets, antiquarianism, and the national institution of the Church. In these ways, Wordsworth uses the epitaph both to support his own poetics of sincere feeling and simple language and to link that poetics to English nationalism generally.

The specificity of the epitaphic site is crucial to this process, providing a focus of sympathy that grounds identification in a particular real or imagined landscape. Esther Schor makes this point about the role of the burial site as a foundation for sympathy and imagined community in *Bearing the Dead*. In Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments,* Schor claims, "society may be defined as those who share a common dead," and the dead provide a kind of stable "gold standard" for the moral and discursive circulation that holds together a far-flung society.[17] The dead in this model literally ground the exchange of sympathetic identification in the permanence of the landscape and its powerful national associations. This power of sympathy was central to late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century models of poetics and social theory generally, as a faculty which both connected authors with unknown readers and combined separate individuals into a single cohesive society.[18] The ability to educate and enlarge this sympathetic power in his

15. See Bernhardt-Kabisch, "The Epitaph and the Romantic Poets," as well as "Wordsworth: the Monumental Poet," *Philological Quarterly* 44, no 4 (1965): 505; and Schor, *Bearing the Dead,* 55–56.

16. On the rise of this domestic tourism, see Ian Ousby, *The Englishman's England: Taste, Travel, and the Rise of Tourism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) and Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989).

17. Schor, 37–38.

18. The term "sympathy" was theorized by writers as various as the Earl of Shaftsbury, David Hume, Adam Smith, William Godwin, Edmund Burke, and Joanna Baillie. For an elaboration of its importance in various models of literary and social cohesion, together with the related power of sensibility, see Thomas McCarthy, *Relationships of Sympathy: the Writer and the Reader in British Romanticism* (Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 1997); Janet Todd, *Sensibility:*

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readers was central to Wordsworth's view of his role as a poet, justifying poetry's importance for the moral life of both individuals and the nation. It plays a central role in Wordsworth's poetics, repeatedly invoked in both the "Essays upon Epitaphs" and the "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads* (*Prose* 1:124, 138, 140, 141, 143; 2:51, 53, 57, 59, 82).

Through the form of the epitaph, Wordsworth could elicit this intense sympathy from the reader for the deceased in a way he could not do directly for himself as a living author. The function of the absent dead in the epitaph, in this regard, parallels that of the absent author, as both bind together a public of scattered individuals through common sympathetic identification with a central text. The separation between the reader and the dead subject of the epitaph suggests a similarly discomforting final separation between author and reader(s) in print culture, but allows Wordsworth to displace this anxiety onto the dead—especially in poems where the authorial figure emerges as an explicit mediating presence between the reader and the deceased.

The relative permanence of the epitaphic memorial also allowed Wordsworth to associate his poetry with the permanence of the poetic canon, as opposed to what he saw as the degraded ephemerality of much of print culture. Wordsworth's first "Essay upon Epitaphs," for instance, contrasts "the unsightly manner in which our monuments are crowded together in the busy, noisy, unclean, and almost grassless church-yard of a large town, with the still seclusion of a Turkish cemetery, in some remote place; and yet further sanctified by the grove of cypress in which it is embosomed"; or less exotically, with the small village churchyards of his native Lake District (*Prose* 2:54–55). This description of the city churchyard calls to mind Wordsworth's description of Bartholomew Fair in *The Prelude* as a crowded commercial spectacle in which "the whole creative powers of man [are laid] asleep";[19] or his diatribe in the "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads* against the debasing effects of commercial print culture and the "degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation" which it promotes (*Prose* 1:129, 131). In this same spirit, the Pedlar in *The Ruined Cottage* contrasts his tragic tale

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an Introduction (London: Methuen, 1986); C. B. Jones, *Radical Sensibility* (New York: Routledge, 1993), esp. 1–58; and Stephen Cox, *"The Stranger Within Thee": Concepts of the Self in Late Eighteenth-Century British Literature* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1981), 13–58. On the importance of print circulation and the idea of "sympathy" in binding together individuals into a society, see Kathleen Wilson, "Citizenship, Empire, and Modernity in the English Provinces, c. 1720–1790," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29, no. 1 (1995): 72–75, and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991).

19. Quoted from *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*, ed. Mark L. Reed (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 7:654.

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with other, more commercial tales that "hold vain dalliance with the misery . . . of the dead."[20] Opposed to the confusion, overcrowdedness, and uncleanliness of the town cemetery—like the overcrowded confusion of voices in the commercial print market—Wordsworth's "Essays" advocate the seclusion of the individual monument or rural churchyard, where the reader can engage in a sustained act of solitary reading and reflection. This model of proper epitaphic reading suggests the sustained, contemplative, and sympathetic attention that Wordsworth hoped for his own poetry.

Wordsworth's emphasis on the permanence of the epitaphic text may also contrast with the ephemerality of the newspaper obituary, which had emerged as a major genre during the eighteenth century.[21] In the "Essays upon Epitaphs," Wordsworth pointedly contrasts the permanence of the inscribed tombstone against the more ephemeral "funeral oration or elegiac poem," suggesting the opposition of high-canonical literature to the productions of what were for him a more thoroughly commercialized and less enduring print culture (*Prose* 2:60). Wordsworth also associates the permanence of the epitaphic text with the need for high moral seriousness: like the classic poetic text, it must address "permanent" thoughts and feelings, not just topical or particular ones (*Prose* 2:59–60; see also 2:87). Unlike the amorphous identity of the text in print culture, with its multiple copies and uncertain circulation, the inscribed and physically located epitaph offered a reassuring sense of textual permanence, presence, and stability. The physically placed epitaph established a specific location to which the reader must come, in body or in imagination, which contrasted with the unlocatable circulation of the poem in the simulacrums of print culture. In this way, the form of the epitaph gave the author the power, if only in imagination, to establish the context and location of reading, literally grounding the poem in a specific landscape on a massive, inscribed page of stone.

The epitaph also supported Wordsworth's poetics by hallowing common people as a proper subject for morally elevated verse. To fulfill its moral function of exhortation and instruction, the epitaph for Wordsworth must speak "the general language of humanity" and appeal to our "common nature," or "the common or universal feeling of humanity"

20. Quoted from *The Ruined Cottage and the Pedlar*, ed. James Butler (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), MS D, lines 223–24. All subsequent quotations from this poem are from this source. On the connection between Wordsworth's *Ruined Cottage* and the poetry of sensibility flooding the print markets at the time, see James Averill, *Wordsworth and the Poetry of Human Suffering* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), and Karen Swann, "Suffering and Sensation in *The Ruined Cottage*," *PMLA* 106, no. 1 (1991): 83–95. The line between this popular literature of sensibility and Wordsworth's own tales of suffering was a fine one; hence his need, both in this poem and in his critical writings, to distinguish the difference so vehemently.

21. Scodel, "English Poetic Epitaph," 404–6.

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(*Prose* 2:57, 59). As the "Essays upon Epitaphs" stress repeatedly, an epitaph is written for the individual but also addresses death as a fate common to all individuals (see *Prose* 2:53, 57, 59, 87). In so doing, it combines "a due proportion of the common or universal feeling of humanity to sensations excited by a distinct and clear conception, conveyed to the reader's mind, of the individual" (*Prose* 2:57). In much the same way, Wordsworth's poetry often sought to address individual readers under the sign of a common humanity. Hence Wordsworth defines the epitaph in his "Essays" as "open to all"—open, that is, to a nation of readers from all occupations and social classes, from the aristocratic "indolent" to the almost illiterate "stooping old man" (*Prose* 2:59). The outdoor churchyard, as opposed to the exclusive private chapel or interior of the church where the rich and powerful traditionally had their memorials, also corresponded to a new, more inclusive model of society, produced in part by an expanding print culture. Wordsworth's prescriptions for the epitaph are thus the same prescriptions he makes for poetry generally, when he argues in the "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads* that poetry must address universal human feelings and speak the "real language of men," elevating common lives to high moral and spiritual significance (*Prose* 1:119, 123, 131, 137). Wordsworth's ideal epitaph presents the purified common language that he sets against "poetic diction" in his "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads* as the proper language for poetry.

In these ways, the epitaph allowed Wordsworth both to represent and to justify his poetics in relation to an emerging print market public of readers from all social classes. The epitaph's connection with death carried a sense of moral authority that could invoke deep feeling and sustained attention from these poems' readers, and that allowed these poems to represent themselves as scenes of instruction and symbolically dictate the terms of their own reception in ways that would not otherwise have been creditable. In the process, these epitaphic texts provided a moral authority and a role for Wordsworth as author that compensated for his lack of other clear sources of social authority. It is no accident, in this sense, that the period in which Wordsworth explored the epitaphic mode most extensively was also the period in which he was most actively struggling to establish his own authorial identity. Wordsworth used the epitaph in this way both to theorize his poetics and to justify his authorial role in relation to a print market public.

"Lines left upon the Seat of a Yew-tree," first published in the 1798 edition of *Lyrical Ballads,* illustrates how the epitaphic mode could respond to and symbolically reshape the contexts of print market reception. The poem begins with the *Siste Viator* convention by abruptly arresting the reader or "traveller" in an imagined landscape, after an opening interruptive dash:

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"—Nay, Traveller! rest."[22] This opening address forcefully pulls the reader aside and compels his or her attention, much as the Ancient Mariner does to the Wedding Guest in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (published just two poems before "Lines," at the start of the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*).[23] As in *The Rime,* this *Siste Viator* opening draws the reader into the poem's imagined space and exerts symbolic control over the contexts and process of reception. After its opening, "Lines" twice more addresses the reader as a "Stranger" (21, 46), emphasizing the lack of immediate relationship between author and reader and creating a dramatic situation analogous to print market reception. Although Wordsworth's friend Charles Lamb identified the poem as an "Inscription," for its association with a specific place and landscape, the poem itself is too long to be actually inscribed.[24] Instead, it presents the "Lines" as a page left on the yew-seat for the reader. Beginning with its title, the poem thus dramatizes a scenario of solitary reading, as it imagines the reader coming upon its text within a narrow yew-tree bower in an isolated landscape, "far from all human dwelling" (2). This imagined reader enters the poem as a specifically discursive space, set apart from immediate, face-to-face social relationships.

"Lines left upon the Seat of a Yew-tree" is epitaphic in its description of the life and death of the recluse who built the yew-tree bower, which the poem identifies as his "only monument" (43). The poem uses this epitaphic scenario in order to instruct the reader in sympathetic identification, both with the recluse and, through him, with a wider society. It offers the recluse as an emblem of alienated individualism and diseased or "unfruitful" imagination, stagnating in his own self-imposed isolation. Yet the poem's concluding admonishment, to embrace a wider sympathetic association, continues to direct the reader to solitude and introversion, rather than to immediate social relationship:

> Stranger! henceforth be warned; and know, that pride,
> Howe'er disguised in it own majesty,
> Is littleness; that he, who feels contempt
> For any living thing, hath faculties
> Which he has never used: that thought with him

22. Quoted from *Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797–1800,* ed. James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), line 1. All subsequent quotations from this poem and from "The Thorn" are cited by lines from this edition.

23. For a reading of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* in relation to reader reception, see Scott Hess, "The Wedding Guest as Reader: 'The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere' as a Dramatization of Print Circulation and the Construction of the Authorial Self," *Nineteenth Century Studies* 15 (2001): 19–36.

24. See Hartman, "Wordsworth, Inscriptions," 390.

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Is in its infancy. The man, whose eye
Is ever on himself, doth look on one,
The least of nature's works, one who might move
The wise man to that scorn which wisdom holds
Unlawful ever. O, be wiser thou!
Instructed that true knowledge leads to love,
True dignity abides with him alone
Who, in the silent hour of inward thought,
Can still suspect, and still revere himself,
In lowliness of heart.

(46–60)

Although it directs the reader outwards, towards others, the poem instructs that reader to seek this connection specifically through "the silent hour of inward thought." As the site of solitary reading, intense inward meditation, and sympathetic connection, the yew-tree bower provides an emblem of print market reading, in which solitude and introspection become the paradoxical but necessary conditions for true social identification.

The yew-seat in this respect fulfills the function that Michele Turner Sharp ascribes to the epitaph generally in Wordsworth's writing, creating "a public space into which the self may safely enter," an enclosed depth "that is simultaneously and inextricably that of the grave and of the autonomous human subject."[25] Far from human community and almost entirely enclosed in "circling shade" (11), the bower represents both the closed, autonomous self of the recluse and the potential, through sympathetic reading, to open that self into social identification with a community of other readers. Although the recluse constructs the yew-seat as a site of alienation and refuge for the failure of his social ambitions, the poem instructs the reader to turn this same seat into a site for sympathetic identification through the private act of reading. Proper imaginative engagement thus transforms the yew-seat and the individualized act of reading from a site of alienation into a site of social identification and connection. In the process, the poem's epitaphic site functions in precisely the same way that Wordsworth describes in his "Essays Upon Epitaphs," providing a central locus for the construction of a far-flung discursive community, constituted through the shared act of reading and sympathetic identification. At the same time, it allows Wordsworth to instruct the reader in how to read the poetic text properly, and thus to dictate the terms of his own reception.

The *Ruined Cottage* manuscript functions in much the same way, establishing Margaret's cottage as an epitaphic site for solitary reading and the

25. Michele Turner Sharp, "Re-membering the Real, Dis(re)membering the Dead: Wordsworth's *Essays Upon Epitaphs*," *SiR* 34, no. 2 (1995): 292.

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construction of a new discursive community to compensate for the breakdown of an older, more immediate form of community. This poem, however, introduces the Pedlar as a more explicit figure of authorship who mediates the reader's relationship with the deceased. As various critics have remarked, the narrator of *The Ruined Cottage* offers a stand-in for the actual reader.[26] As the Pedlar instructs in how to read the ruins of the cottage properly, the relationship between Pedlar and narrator parallels the relationship between the poem's actual author and reader. By setting this relationship at the isolated site of the cottage, similar to the recluse's bower in "Lines," the poem creates its own discursive space apart from other direct social relationships, again analogous to the situation of print market reading. Significantly, the Pedlar addresses the narrator as "Stranger" in an early manuscript version—a mode of address that survives in the vestigial formal "Sir" of later versions (96, 116, 252) and which indicates the same relation between author and unknown individual reader as the *Siste Viator* address at the start of "Lines left upon the Seat of a Yew-tree."[27] The details of the narrator's identity in the poem remain unspecified, allowing him to stand in for each and every reader regardless of social distinctions, thus allowing the poem to address its entire public (or at least its entire male public) through this figure of individual reception.

The process of sympathetic and imaginative education that takes place in *The Ruined Cottage* is remarkably similar to that of "Lines left upon the Seat of a Yew-tree." The ruined cottage replaces the yew-seat as an emblem of individual alienation and lost community, while Margaret replaces the dead recluse as the object of epitaphic sympathy. The narrator learns to read and respond to Margaret's traces in the ruins of her cottage, just as the reader of "Lines" learns to respond to the vestigial traces of the recluse in the yew-tree bower—first developing sympathy for the deceased, then expanding

26. For some versions of this reading of the Pedlar as author figure instructing the narrator as reader, see Anne Williams, *Prophetic Strain: The Greater Lyric in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 123–39; Willard Spiegelman, *Wordsworth's Heroes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 41–48; Jonathan Wordsworth, *The Music of Humanity* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1969), esp. 87–101; John Rieder, *Wordsworth's Counter-Revolutionary Turn: Community, Virtue and Vision in the 1790s* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997), chap. 6, esp. 174–76; and Evan Radcliffe, "In Dreams Begins Responsibility: Wordsworth's Ruined Cottage Story," *SiR* 23, no. 1 (1984): 101–19. James Chandler remarks in *Wordsworth's Second Nature: A Study of the Poetry and Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), that "every careful student of [the] poem has noticed that the 'I' of the poem . . . is a representative of the reader" (141).

27. A transcript of the poem's conclusion was copied from a working manuscript that has not survived into Coleridge's June 10, 1797 letter to John Estlin, in which the Pedlar addresses the narrator with the telltale word "Stranger" (see *The Ruined Cottage and the Pedlar,* page 95, line 526). Fosso discusses the changing relationship between Pedlar and narrator across drafts (see *Buried Communities,* 106–7).

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that sympathy into a wider social identification, including even people with whom the reader has no direct social contact. To borrow a phrase from the "Essays Upon Epitaphs," the ruined cottage, like the yew-seat, becomes a place where "the thoughts of the individuals, without any communication with each other, must oftentimes meet" (*Prose* 2:93). Through this central epitaphic site, the poem constitutes a new form of discursive community to compensate for the breakdown of traditional local community.

The Ruined Cottage, however, makes the figure of the author much more central to this process than does "Lines left upon the Seat of a Yew-tree," in which the authorial voice remains unspecified. Asleep on a bench, as if ready to awaken whenever someone arrives, the Pedlar represents the author waiting within the text for the "arrival" of the reader. As he tells his story, this author figure also explicitly dictates the terms of that story's reception, using it to shape the imaginative and sympathetic education of his auditor (or reader). He stops in the middle of his story, for instance, at the end of Book One in the *Ruined Cottage* manuscript, to discourse on the proper poetics of sympathy and make sure his auditor receives his tale in the correct spirit; and he ends with the charge to "no longer read / The forms of things with an unworthy eye" (510–11), signaling that his auditor's education in proper reading is now complete. These devices suggest the Pedlar's ability, as a poet, to shape and educate his public by writing this process of education into the central form of the poem.

The relationship between Pedlar and narrator in the poem is oral rather than written, and in this way diverges from "Lines" and from the actual material conditions of print market reception. This aspect of *The Ruined Cottage* fits Wordsworth's general tendency to reimagine his relationship to his public as oral, pointed out by critics such as Jon Klancher and David Perkins.[28] The emphasis on orality, however, represents a symbolic refiguration rather than a realistic alternative to print market reception. In his ambitions to become a national poet, Wordsworth necessarily addressed his poetry primarily to a print audience, with whom he could not hope to establish direct personal contact. Writing an oral relationship into the form of his poems, however, allowed him to exert at least some symbolic control over the terms of his reception, as he reimagined his public on the model of a small sympathetic audience—much like the circle of friends and family he gathered around himself in Grasmere and Rydal.[29] The whole form of

28. Klancher, *Making of English Reading Audiences,* 135–50; David Perkins, *Wordsworth and the Poetry of Sincerity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 143–49.

29. For discussion of how Wordsworth constructed his relationship to his public, see Newlyn, *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism,* chap. 3, and Hess, *Authoring the Self,* chaps. 6 and 7.

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the "oral epitaph," so prevalent in Wordsworth's epitaphic poetry, is thus a kind of deliberate oxymoron, attempting to reconcile the widespread reception of the print market with the longed-for familiarity and control of a direct author-to-reader encounter. As he revised *The Ruined Cottage* into Book One of *The Excursion,* Wordsworth changed the narrator's relationship with the Pedlar to make it more familiar, transforming their meeting from an encounter between strangers, to an accidental contact with an acquaintance, and finally a planned appointment with a long-beloved friend. Yet through all these changes, the basic terms of their encounter remain essentially the same, invoking print market reception through an individual author-to-reader connection in a space set outside other customary social relationships.

At the site of Margaret's cottage, the Pedlar teaches his auditor or reader two seemingly opposed skills: the ability to enter into deep sympathetic identification with others and the power to construct his own autonomous identity. In so doing, he duplicates the final, paradoxical charge of "Lines left upon the Seat of a Yew-tree," which directs the reader to seek social connection specifically through an act of isolated individual imagination. In so doing, the poem responds to the social dissolution of community that it narrates, but it also responds to the loss of contact between author and public. In both cases, it compensates for the loss of old roles and connections by constructing a more individuated form of identity, sustained in a new discursive community through common identification with the imagined, epitaphic site.

Margaret and her cottage provide a central anchor for the Pedlar's identity in the poem, first through direct, personal relationship and later through memory and imagination. He describes her as giving him "a daughter's welcome" in his visits, and he in turn loves her "as my own child" (95–96), establishing him in a symbolic father role. It's not clear exactly what the Pedlar does for Margaret—he seems to offer her only a few meaningless words of admonition in the face of her tragic loss and alienation—but his repeated visits demonstrate her centrality in sustaining his identity, providing him with a surrogate family site that anchors his sense of self in his wanderings. Margaret's physical death seems to make no difference to this role: if anything, it makes the Pedlar's identification with her even more secure. As Margaret grows more and more alienated over the course of the poem, she shows an increasing tendency to wander, but her death fixes her memory to the specific epitaphic site of the cottage and establishes the Pedlar's relationship with her as immune to future changes. At the same time, her death frees him from having to do anything specific for her in return, other than retell her story. Thus the Pedlar can contemplate the ruins of Margaret's cottage with unclouded cheerfulness, in his

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final speech about the consolations of the spear grass that allows him to "[walk] along my road in happiness" (525). The cottage, overgrown with spear grass, becomes as secure and stable a memorial as a grass-covered grave.

In life, Margaret and her cottage provided a center of community, as she both held together her own family and ministered to the Pedlar and other passing travelers, offering water from her well. In death, Margaret and the ruins of her cottage become the center for a new kind of community, now as an object of reading and sympathetic identification. As the narrator learns to read the cottage with a "worthy eye," he learns to internalize a sympathetic connection with Margaret and the site of the cottage in the same way as the Pedlar, imagining her as "one / Whom I had known and loved" (206–8). He later blesses her with "a brother's love," which comforts him even in the "impotence of grief" (499). This sympathetic identification incorporates him into the Pedlar's symbolic family, for as the narrator imagines Margaret as his sister, the Pedlar becomes by association his imagined father. In the process, he connects to other, unknown readers as well, included in this same sympathetic community as they too learn to read the text and contemplate the epitaphic memorial of the cottage with the proper sympathy. By learning to read in this way, readers both construct and sustain their own, autonomous identities (in the same way as the Pedlar) and constitute this wider discursive community.

The text of the *Ruined Cottage* substitutes for the physical cottage as the central locus of community, marking a shift from immediate, face-to-face community, located in a specific place, to a discursive community of scattered individuals, united by their shared imaginative and sympathetic identification and by the shared act of private reading. In the same way that Wordsworth describes in his "Essays Upon Epitaphs," the cottage becomes an epitaphic "shrine to which the fancies of a scattered family may repair in pilgrimage; the thoughts of the individuals, without any communication with each other, must oftentimes meet here" (*Prose* 2:93). This textual shrine of the poem, however, does not just hold together an extended biological family; it turns the far-flung discursive community of readers into a newly constituted symbolic family—the family of the reading nation. The Pedlar, as author figure, presides over the site as a kind of father figure, whose poetic narrative at once instructs his reader(s) and constitutes this discursive family or community.

While poems such as "Lines left upon the Seat of a Yew-tree" and *The Ruined Cottage* demonstrate this model of epitaphic poetics, "The Thorn" dramatizes the failure of epitaphic reading and its potentially disastrous social consequences. "The Thorn" parallels *The Ruined Cottage* in structure, except for the absence of a strong central poetic figure. The thorn takes the place of the ruined cottage as the epitaphic site, while Martha Ray and

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her infant replace Margaret as the main epitaphic subjects and emblems of communal disintegration. Unlike *The Ruined Cottage* however, the epitaphic site of "The Thorn" proves illegible, both literally and figuratively. The poem as a whole never establishes any specific facts about Martha or the infant's fate and so cannot generate any sustained sympathetic or imaginative activity, only a series of unsatisfying, unanswered questions. In place of *The Ruined Cottage*'s sense of catharsis and final equanimity, Martha Ray's voice continues to punctuate "The Thorn" with its inarticulate and unassimilated cry (65–66, 76–77, 209, 252–53). The poem concludes only with her solipsistic, inarticulate, and still uninterpreted lament, turned fecklessly inward upon herself: "O misery! oh misery! / O woe is me! oh misery!" (252–53).

This sympathetic failure begins with the poetic speaker, from whom Wordsworth takes pains to distinguish himself in an explanatory note, describing the narrator's persona as a superstitious retired sea captain. Like the idle and sensationalist tales of suffering that Wordsworth elsewhere associates with a degraded print culture, this narrator arouses the reader's curiosity but ultimately fails to instruct or edify. Because the poem offers no proper reading of the epitaphic site, it never establishes the thorn as a site of sympathetic identification to compensate for Martha Ray's ongoing alienation, into which the reader also is gradually drawn. Like the thorn, which is dragged down by moss but remains alive, the reader is left in an uneasy limbo, fixated on the epitaphic site of the thorn but without a proper focus of sympathy, and so is unable to constitute either a sense of imaginative self-sufficiency or sympathetic identification with a larger discursive community. While the Pedlar demonstrates the proper role of the poet in relation to his print market audience, the narrator of "The Thorn" dramatizes the dire consequences that result from the failure of this poetic office.

With the expansion of *The Ruined Cottage* into the nine-book *Excursion* in 1814, Wordsworth extended his epitaphic mode to almost epic length, while at the same time shifting from a focus on the author as autonomous individual to the author as grounded in established national institutions. As the poem progresses, the somewhat bohemian Pedlar gives way to the Pastor as the chief poetic figure and central authority, paralleling an evolution in Wordsworth's own sense of poetic identity. Like the Pedlar (now called the Wanderer), the Pastor's narration also centers on epitaphs, in the two long books entitled "The Churchyard Among the Mountains," in which he narrates a series of "authentic epitaphs" that "epitomize the [lives]" of the buried villagers.[30] His poetic role, however, links the epitaph more spe-

30. Quoted from *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940–49), vol. 5, 5:560–61. All subsequent quotations are cited by book and line number from this edition.

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cifically to national institutions and to nationalism, while putting the poet in a still more authoritative mediating relationship with his readers.

The fate of Margaret in *The Ruined Cottage* may in some ways represent the general social situation of England, but the village churchyard in *The Excursion* becomes an even more explicit site of nationalism. Book Six of *The Excursion* begins, before its narration of epitaphs, with a paean to English church and state, as the institutions underlying and preserving English "Freedom" (6:1). This opening paean connects these institutions specifically to the "Poet," who "entreats that servants may abound / Of those pure altars worthy; ministers / Detached from pleasure, to the love of gain / Superior, insusceptible of pride" (6:42–46). The Pastor combines these poetic and priestly offices, his authority massively buttressed by these "solemn institutions" (5:1001) that Wordsworth celebrates.

As he narrates his epitaphs to the knot of listeners gathered in the churchyard, the Pastor symbolically addresses the national reading public as a whole. The local Recluse, the itinerant Wanderer, and the socially and geographically unidentified narrator (who continues to function as a stand-in for the poem's actual reader) represent, by extension, all of English society, gathered together in the sacred discursive space of the churchyard. In this role, they also represent the print market public that Wordsworth hoped to constitute as the audience for his own poetry, just as the Pastor represents Wordsworth's own idealized office of "Poet." At the same time, the epitaphs, told individually but connected to one another by the Pastor's narration and by the common site of the churchyard, become symbolic of an English (or British) society of individuals from all social classes, unified through the ongoing offices of the Poet. Some of the epitaphs that the Pastor narrates explicitly stress this nationalism, including the story of the two men, one a Scottish Jacobite and one a southern English Whig, who overcome their initial differences to become fast friends and erect a common monument together, representing the unity of British society after the uprising of 1745 (6:392–521); and the story of the buried Elizabethan knight, his exact identity shrouded in legend, which connects the village churchyard to the supposed golden age of English nationalism (7:921–75). The churchyard, even more explicitly than Margaret's cottage in Book One, provides the function that Wordsworth theorizes for the epitaph in his three "Essays upon Epitaphs," binding together a society of physically distant individuals in common identification. The village "Churchyard Among the Mountains" thus becomes a central discursive site for the production of readers' individual identities and for the production of English or British nationalism.

With *The Excursion*'s more explicit nationalism, the symbolic significance of the central discursive site changes. Whereas Margaret's cottage

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represents the breakdown of local community and the resulting alienation, the churchyard represents the triumphant organic continuity of English traditions and society. After the day there, the group of auditors will disperse to their various locations, but they will internalize and carry with them this common experience of the churchyard and its sense of continuity and stability. The Pastor/poet, meanwhile, remains near the churchyard to await new readers and to preside symbolically over this national discursive site of poetry. In so doing, he fulfills the same role as the Pedlar, asleep on his bench as he awaits the reader at the start of Book One, and the same role Wordsworth later assumed in person at Rydal Mount, ready to exhort and instruct his individual visitors amidst the landscape his poetry had made famous.[31]

Like *The Ruined Cottage* and "Lines left upon the Seat of a Yew-tree," *The Excursion* removes all traces of immediate local relationships in order to constitute its wider discursive community of the nation. The Solitary resembles Margaret in *The Ruined Cottage* in his tragic social alienation, but unlike Margaret he is not a true local, since he comes to the Lake District only late in life to retire after the disappointment of his worldly hopes. The Pastor's office stations him in the local community, but he functions in the poem primarily as a member of the national "clerisy" or intelligentsia, interpreting his churchyard and the surrounding landscape to outside visitors much as Wordsworth aspired to do for the region. The narrator and Wanderer, although they spend several days in the Lake District mountains, have no real interaction with any locals except for these two figures—and towards the end of the poem, with the Pastor's family, in which they are all symbolically included. They do briefly encounter some locals, or "rustic persons" (2:387), bearing a coffin in a burial ritual, but this procession quickly passes in the course of only thirty lines, and the two groups never exchange words or directly recognize each other (2:370–402). The funeral procession, which the two travelers initially suspect is the Solitary's (2:395–402), serves a mainly symbolic purpose, representing a communal ritual around death in contrast with the Solitary's profound alienation from all forms of community. The momentary appearance of a "peasant of the lowest class" during the Pastor's epitaphic narrations in the middle of Book Seven serves a similar function as symbolic occasion, providing a convenient exemplum for the Pastor's speech (7:55). Though this local figure does silently acknowledge the group, they do not speak or interact with him in any significant way. Apart from the pastor's immediate family circle, community in the area thus seems more a function of dying than of living, established by the graves lying side by side in the churchyard rather than

31. See Ousby, *Englishman's England*, 179–80.

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through immediate social relationship. Social connection depends primarily on the Pastor's narrative, as he performs his poetic office in constituting the discursive community.

The mountain village churchyard of Books Five through Seven replaces the ruined cottage of Book One as the ultimate epitaphic locus of community in the poem. While the female Margaret dies and herself becomes part of the landscape, the male Solitary is redeemed through his incorporation into this living and ongoing community. Significantly, the Solitary does not reconnect to members of his local community, but to this circle of fellow auditors gathered from afar, representing the kind of idealized national print market public that Wordsworth hoped to gather through his own poetry. At the same time, the bohemian Wanderer gives way to the professionally established Pastor as the main officer and celebrant of the discursive community, representing Wordsworth's more settled sense of his own poetic identity (produced, in part, through completing the poem).

The Excursion thus offers a comic rather than tragic version of the epitaphic mode, founded on the ongoing continuity of tradition that binds together the living and the dead, in place of the rupture of Margaret's premature alienation and death. Despite these marked differences, however, much of the pattern remains the same, as the epitaphic site in both cases serves as a locus for the reader's sympathetic identification and instruction, converting the potential alienation of death into a new model of individual identity and at the same time a new communal identification. The churchyard displaces the ruined cottage as the central site for this identification, which readers can internalize and continue to carry with them as individuals. In this way, it also provides the same function that Wordsworth hoped for his own poetic oeuvre, as a central imaginative site unifying a nation of readers—presided over not by the Pastor but by the figure of Wordsworth himself, as Poet.

During the nineteenth century the epitaphic site, and especially the tomb of the author, began to serve the same roles in actuality that it already provided imaginatively. The authorial "corpse" was often associated with the "corpus" of that author's writings, as Samantha Matthews claims in *Poetical Remains,* and the gravesite became associated with the numinous power of authorship—the sense of simultaneous presence and absence characteristic of the author in print culture generally.[32] Authors' gravesites, with these associations, hosted mass literary pilgrimages throughout the century. Wordsworth's own grave became an especially celebrated focus of homage and pilgrimage, evoking the same kind of sympathetic identifica-

32. Samantha Matthews, *Poetical Remains: Poets' Graves, Bodies, and Books in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

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tion in visitors that he tried to invoke through his epitaphic poetry.[33] By sympathetically identifying with Wordsworth at the site of his grave, whether in person or in imagination, readers could both construct their own individual identities and connect to a discursive community of fellow readers, all performing this same sympathetic act. As a focus of identification, Wordsworth's gravesite generated hundreds of tribute poems, and it became customary for biographies to end with its description.[34] The epitaphic function that Wordsworth wrote into his poetry was thus transferred to his actual grave, becoming an imaginative center for a nation of print market readers and an emblem for the organic continuity of the English tradition.

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33. Matthews, *Poetical Remains,* 153–63.
34. Matthews, 157, 179.

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