

Walking through Crisis: Chiang Yee's Wordsworthian Odyssey in *A Silent Traveller in Lakeland*

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Abstract Chiang Yee's journal *A Silent Traveller in Lakeland* shares intent and features with the poetry of William Wordsworth with regard to the theme of solitary walks used to achieve a degree of solace and resolution at a time of personal crisis. The walks are used to unify fragments of thoughts, feelings, visions, sensory experiences and meetings; patterns of such elements moral philosophers have called "texture of being and personal vision." These fragments are parts that form "fables" of the walking subjects; such fable-making, particularly when created on a journey or pilgrimage, can be seen as a moral and ethical endeavour that offers an alternative model to the "rule-obedience" model. Chiang and Wordsworth embark on journeys to help restore a sense of moral value after committing acts of betrayal.

Key words walk; solitude; imagination; crisis; ethics

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Introduction

In the summer of 1936, Chiang Yee travelled to the Lake District in an attempt to restore his peace of mind. Chiang had left China in 1933 to study at UCL and joined SOAS in 1935. After taking a role in China's civil war on behalf of the Northern Expedition, he had left his family and friends behind in the midst of war and on the brink of the Japanese invasion. Though Britain was peaceful, Europe was not and the Spanish Civil War broke out just prior to his departure for the Lake District. The news from Spain and an increasingly tense Europe reminded him of

the situation in China and of his situation as an exile. Chiang refers to this period in his journal, *A Silent Traveller in Lakeland*, as a form of crisis and the trip to the Lake District as an attempt to resolve it.

A Silent Traveller in Lakeland is an interesting hybrid of a book, it is part travel journal, part poetry and partially a book of painting. It is presented as an outsider's view of an extremely familiar landscape, one that has been the subject of native travellers, journals since at least that other poet-traveller, Thomas Gray's tour in 1769. Chiang approaches the Lake District from a Chinese perspective having absorbed much of the writing of the particular landscape through translation and he acknowledges his greatest debt to William Wordsworth, who he has read most extensively, and who he believes is a poet similar in spirit to the great nature poets of China of the Tang and Song Dynasties (circa. 618–1279 CE). It is the Tang poet, Li Bai, he writes of in comparison to Wordsworth, describing how, as a child, he was taken by his father and grandfather to the Poet's Temple twice a year for a memorial ceremony, and how, as an adult and local governor, he then led the ceremony (Chiang 67). He refers also to the Song landscape painter Li Cheng as another cultural perspective (Ibid 37). Chiang shows us throughout the journal that he is not a detached or naive observer, he is imbued with poetry and painting and travels to the Lake District with expectations drawn from both his own perception of landscape through the "mountains and rivers" tradition of Chinese poetry and painting and through the British Romantic literature he has studied (Ibid 3). It is Wordsworth and his poetry that urged the reader to see differently, to see the familiar and the commonplace in an extraordinary way that Chiang utilises in his approach to such a familiar landscape.

Chiang is also drawn to Wordsworth as the poet who not only wrote in and about the Lake District but who walked through it. The mobile perspective and rhythms of the walker is important in his view of the landscape; as much as possible Chiang's tour is a pedestrian one. It is one that not only further binds him to Wordsworth but to many other poets and philosophers in history, not least the poets of the Tang and Song Dynasties whose walks in the mountains lay at the heart of their poems. Chiang himself grows up wandering the paths of the Lu Mountains near his home, and then later many other mountainous parts of China (Ibid 4). It is as a poet and artist walking through the mountains of the Lake District that will make up the narrative of his journal. The context of the walking tour being the civil war in Spain and increasing political tension in Europe, the civil war in China and the impending invasion by the Japanese, and the abandoning of his young family in China.

He begins his journey with thoughts of Wordsworth and ends it at the poet's home and museum at Dove Cottage, completing a circular tour from Wasdale in the south-west, up to Keswick and down to Grasmere in the south-east. Chiang comments on how people travel to Grasmere and visit Dove Cottage as a form of "pilgrimage" to Wordsworth. They visit to see the material remains associated with the poet. This is not how he sees his tour, he is interested in how the landscape stimulated Wordsworth to write his poetry (Ibid 66). However, his walk is a form of pilgrimage in that it is a journey in which he attempts to resolve a major ethical dilemma, the abandoning of his family in China during a time of war. Wordsworth left his pregnant lover, Annette Vallon, in France after the initial struggle of the French Revolution and just before the outbreak of war between Britain and France. He returned to Britain in order to raise money from the publication of his poetry, only to find his way back to France and Annette cut off by war. It is this personal crisis and the wider geo-political disillusionment of the revolution in France that Wordsworth addresses in *The Prelude* (1805). It is evident that both men felt guilt, depression, sleeplessness and a sense of exile in relation to such events. Wordsworth relates in his poem how walking, friendship and poetry brought about a degree of resolution in his own crisis, and it is evident that Chiang is describing a similar path in his Lake District journal.

Given the nature of such events it is possible to assume that neither man was in a position to return to their partners and children; if so, how can they ethically account for, or justify, their safe position beyond the reach of either war? It is the ethical philosophy of Ronald Hepburn and Iris Murdoch that I find interesting on this point, in particular their writing on "texture of being and the nature of personal vision" (Hepburn and Murdoch 39). They argue that a moral or ethical position can be achieved by the conventional model of "moral judgment as the endorsing of principles, commitment to universalisable policies (rule-obedience)" or by another model which is "a moral endeavour as the realising of a pattern of life or the following out of a pilgrimage" (Ibid 14). It is this latter model that I believe is applicable to the two crisis narratives of Wordsworth and Chiang.

Hepburn and Murdoch suggest our morality can be formed out of fables and patterns of our lives rather than by rules, as fable making is an essential part of human life; "It is very much up to a moral agent how he fashions his character by the culture of his imagination, by contemplation of the noble or debased; and the parables, symbols of ideals and the concatenation of these "fables" may clearly play a large part in this" (Ibid 17). They define this notion of a fable more as a "cluster of personal symbols compounded by childhood memory" (Ibid 15) than

as a necessarily coherent narrative. They write further: “One may look upon the “material” of one’s life, one’s dispositions, station in life, intellectual and emotional resources as they are at any moment “given,” rather as an artist regards his canvas and paint or a sculptor his stone” (Ibid 17). The fables they identify are of the moment, often elusive, always under construction. Wordsworth and Chiang’s crisis narratives are self-fashioning fables. Both are journeys of self-discovery, of finding resolution through walking, through realising unity with the objects and processes of nature; both include visionary and transformative moments. An essential part of this fable-making is the walk, or in the context of a personal crisis, the walking cure. Such a theme is integral to much of Wordsworth’s poetry, not just *The Prelude*, and his development of it will affect the way in which Chiang represents his.

Walking and Wordsworth

One of Wordsworth’s near contemporaries who wrote about the solace of solitary walking and how it perfectly enables thought was the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) whose books *The Confessions* (1770) and *Reveries of a Solitary Walker* (1778), both detailing his walks and how they became the vehicles of his ideas, would have been familiar to Wordsworth. He wrote in *The Confessions*: “I like to walk at my leisure, and halt when I please. The wandering life is what I like. To journey on foot, unhurried, in fine weather, and in fine country, and to have something pleasant to look forward to at my goal, that is of all ways of life the one that suits me best” (Rousseau 167). As Wordsworth was to do as a young man, Rousseau walked across the Alps from France into Italy, “following in Hannibal’s footsteps across the mountains.” He concluded: “This memory has left me the strongest taste for everything associated with it, for mountains especially and for travelling on foot” (Ibid 64).

Rousseau stressed the solitary nature of the walk, a point made by another contemporary of Wordsworth’s, William Hazlitt, in his essay “On Going a Journey” from his collection *Table Talk* (1821). He argued: “One of the pleasantest things in the world is going a journey; but I like to go by myself” (Hazlitt 136). Hazlitt’s essay on walking is interesting as he comments on how a walk creates what Murdoch later calls a “texture of being” (Hepburn and Murdoch 39). When describing the ever changing context of the walk and the way the imagination shifts, “capriciously,” from one location to another, he writes: “Things near us are seen of the size of life: things at a distance are diminished to the size of the understanding. We measure the universe by ourselves, and even comprehend the

texture of our own being only piece-meal. In this way, however, we remember an infinity of things and places” (Hazlitt 144). The walk transforms the walker: “One idea recalls another, but at the same time excludes all others. In trying to renew old recollections, we cannot as it were unfold the whole web of our existence; we must pick out single threads” (Ibid 145). Both writers consider their own existence on their walks but their thoughts are also full of the books they have read, the paintings they have seen, the music they have listened to, the people they have met; fragments of conversations, of ideas, of images: “single threads drawn from the whole web.”

Wordsworth’s poetry does not only address his own walks, he writes about other walkers and their experiences. The poems from his collection, *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), include a variety of characters who find little but misery and death on the open road and mountain path. In the poem, *The Female Vagrant* (Wordsworth, 1991, 44), Wordsworth suggests the way of the walker does not always lead to enlightenment or happiness; the subject of the poem is educated and articulate but tragedy leaves her without a family and “no earthly friend” (l. 266, 54), she has no destination and lives upon “the mercy of the fields” (l. 253, 53). Destitution, cold and hunger will form part of a person’s “texture of being” but they are unlikely to generate the type of illumination experienced by the more secure and affluent walker who is a pedestrian by choice rather than necessity. Wordsworth further explores the anguish and isolation of people in such desperate situations; for example in *Old Man Travelling* (Ibid 106), the frail old walker appears deep in thought and vigorous for his age, perhaps the experiencing the reveries of the solitary walker, though when questioned he is walking out of necessity to reach the hospital in order to visit his dying son; in *The Old Cumberland Beggar* (Ibid 205), he depicts the loneliness and poverty of a life-long beggar who the narrator urges us not to disregard or despise but to engage with as an act of sympathy and kindness; in the *Song: For a Wandering Jew* (Ibid 178), the open road and beauty of nature do not seem to offer solace or resolution, “Day and night my toils redouble! / Never nearer to my goal, / Night and day, I feel the trouble, / Of the wanderer in my soul.” (l. 17-20, 178); in *Lucy Gray* (Ibid 161) the subject walks out into to the storm, never to return, drawing our attention to the often random, contingent nature of life on the road; and finally in *The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman* (Ibid 108), the old woman is left to die in the wilds by her companions as they cannot carry her without endangering the rest of the group, the Northern Lights crackle over-head and the wolves move in, here the path is the end of life, an open grave. Wordsworth is not naïve in his love of walking and the power it has to heal and

resolve our troubles, the poems of *Lyrical Ballads* amply illustrate the uncertainty, misery and loneliness that life on the open road can cause. For Wordsworth, the hope of any resolution lies in friendship, a sense of place, poetry and imagination, alongside walking. Perhaps John Donne's metaphor of the pair of compasses, from *A Valediction Forbidding Mourning* (1611) is apt here, where the fixed foot sits in the centre, "Yet when the other far doth rome, / It leanes, and hearkens after it, / And growes erect, as that comes home" (Donne l. 30–32, 98). Wordsworth did not always live in Grasmere, though when in trouble he did have his sister, Dorothy, and friend, Coleridge, to return to.

The Prelude of 1805 starts at the end of the journey when Wordsworth arrives in Grasmere, after his visionary climax on the summit of Snowdon, and like Milton's Adam and Eve at the conclusion of *Paradise Lost* when they leave the Garden of Eden, "The earth is all before me ... and should the guide I chuse / Be nothing better than a wandering cloud, / I cannot miss my way" (Wordsworth, 1970, Bk. 1, l. 15–19, 1). The "walking cure" for the grief and disillusionment of his experiences in France is behind him though through his time in Grasmere it is evident that the cure is always being sought, it is a continual process, there is no easy conclusion; the conflicts in France continue and Annette Vallon is bringing up their child, Caroline, in France and requires his support.

Chiang already acknowledges the power of the imagination when walking through mountains, with an eye to poetry and art, it is what he could not resist doing when in China, it is what is already forming the "texture" and "threads" of his life. The choice of not returning to China, if such a choice existed under the circumstances, has been made and now what he has is the "fable-making" of his journey in order to find resolution. Having grown weary of the traffic, pollution and crowds of London, an opportunity for fresh air, silence and solitude in the Lake District is too much to resist. He is tired of the repetition and boredom of work and everyday life, like Wordsworth, he sees himself as a "captive ... coming from a house / Of bondage, from yon City's walls set free" (Ibid. l. 6–7). Part of the fable-making is to compare himself with Wordsworth and to draw in his experiences, however, Chiang makes it clear his walk will be from a Chinese perspective as well. He comments that people from China do make a trip to Dove Cottage as a pilgrimage, and so it is apt that, as the etymology of the word "pilgrimage" is the Latin word "peregrinus," meaning "from another country," "foreign," Chiang will be the pilgrim who brings his "texture of being and vision" to bear on the familiarity of the Lake District and transforms it.

What follows are parallel readings of Wordsworth's *The Prelude* and Chiang's

The Silent Traveller in Lakeland, in the light of Hepburn and Murdoch's ideas on ethical vision, drawing out similarities and engaging differences that could further illuminate both texts and experiences.

Anxiety and Exile

Both writers convey the extent to which the geo-political contexts weigh upon them and, in disturbing their sleep and dreams, impinge upon their imagination, in a sense creating the idea of helpless flight. Their conscience will not let them escape in the way they have escaped the city.

When Wordsworth was in France after the revolution and the proclamation of the republic, the September Massacres, slaughter at the Tuileries and just before the onset of "The Terror" he sensed how things were going wrong and writes how he could not sleep well in his Parisian hotel, he quotes Macbeth ("Sleep no more.") and writes that "at the best it seemed a place of fear, / Unfit for the repose of night, / Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam" (Wordsworth, 1970, Bk. 10, l. 80-82, 179). When he returns to England, leaving Annette and Caroline in the midst of the chaos, his conscience fares no better:

I scarcely had one night of quiet sleep
Such ghastly visions had I of despair
And tyranny, and implements of death,
And long orations which in dreams I pleaded
Before unjust Tribunals, with a voice
Labouring, a brain confounded, and a sense,
Of treachery and desertion in the place
The holiest that I knew of, my own soul. (Ibid. l. 373–380, 187)

As the Committee of Public Safety tried more counter-revolutionaries and the guillotine began to fall with increasingly regularity, Wordsworth's "sense of desertion" intensified, subsuming all other thoughts. Hazlitt had written that "Those who wish to forget painful thoughts, do well to absent themselves for a while from the ties and objects that recall them" (Hazlitt 147). This is far from straightforward when, as Wordsworth states, they lie in your "own soul."

When Chiang arrives at the train station in Seascale, he waits in the rain for his lift "as if I were a wounded soldier from the battlefield waiting for the train to return me behind the lines" (10). As he drives into Wasdale, the valley Wordsworth in his *Guide to the Lakes* argues "is more distinguished by sublimity" than any

other part of the country (Wordsworth 36), he imagines that “bombs destroy the beautiful shapes of crags and trees, aeroplanes break into the solitudes. The horrible word “war” blazed itself upon my mind and destroyed every thought” (Chiang 14). At his accommodation in Wasdale, he says “I slept a little, but in a disturbed way, and woke early in some depression” (Ibid 19). The remainder of his journey is punctuated with further reminders of war be they about China or Spain through newspapers or comments from people he meets. When on a bus tour being driven into Wasdale, Chiang sees a Qing Dynasty bell from China in the Gosforth Church and while he is wondering how it got there, the driver tells the passengers that as Wasdale is so wild a murder could remain undetected. Chiang is unimpressed: “The rest of the party laughed amiably at his remark, but I kept silent and again sickened — after all, why should people be thinking of murders and horrors?” (Ibid 32) An earlier remark from the driver about the last war had already made Chiang’s “heart” sick. He cannot bear to look at a newspaper in his Keswick hotel as it has a headline about Spain (Ibid 39); there is an edition of *The Times* he sees with a headline about China, again he cannot bear to read it (Ibid 53). Chiang rails against the general, impersonal forces that start and sustain war but there is no mention of personal betrayal or desertion.

Wordsworth feels at times like an “inner” exile when he returns to Britain from France after the outbreak of war between the two countries, “no better than an alien in the Land” (Wordsworth, 1970, 10, 193, 182). He finds himself exulting in triumph “When Englishmen by thousands were overthrown”(Ibid. 10, 261, 184), by the French, and refuses to pray in church for British victories, and remains like an “uninvited guest” in his own country (Ibid. 272, 184). He sees himself as an outsider, guilty now of treachery as well as desertion. He writes about how he feels “The ravage of this most unnatural strife / In my own heart; there it lay like a weight” (Ibid. 250–1, 184). For Wordsworth the idea of rejecting your homeland, your place of birth and where your being was formed, is unnatural.

This sense of alienation affects Chiang also. He refers to himself throughout as the solitary Chinese traveller who draws surprised looks from people, for example, as he walks up Scafell in his ill-suited shoes, or as he and his Chinese friend row their boat in a Chinese fashion. He refers to Chinese custom and landscape in comparison to British ones at numerous points in the narrative, sustaining what he calls an “unusual presentation of lake scenery, from the point of view of a homesick easterner” (Chiang 3). While crossing Sty Head Pass, he imagines the walkers going in the opposite direction are surprised to see a Chinese man up in the hills (Ibid 27), he even imagines a horse marking him out as a foreigner (Ibid 35).

Wordsworth writes that he found his way out of his crisis through his friendship with Coleridge and his sister, Dorothy, and through the workings of nature and the imagination: “Nature’s self, by human love / Assisted, through the weary labyrinth / Conducted me again to open day” (Wordsworth, 1970, 10, 921–3, 202). His imaginative realization of nature is achieved through friendship but also solitary walking, and then his experiences are “recollected in tranquillity” afterwards. These create what he calls “spots of time.” It is this route, I would argue, that Chiang uses in his own restoration.

The Solitary / Silent Traveller

Wordsworth’s poetry is that that is seen and observed by the solitary walker, when trying to resolve his crisis following his belief in the betrayal of the French Revolution, in *The Prelude*, he writes:

But much was wanting; therefore did I turn
To you, ye pathways and ye lonely roads,
Sought you enriched with everything I prized,
With human kindness and with nature’s joy. (12, 123–126, 221)

He adds further that “the lonely roads / Were schools to me” (12, 163–64, 222). Wordsworth famously walked the hills composing poetry, the iambic rhythm of the poetry well suited to his gait. It was on these walks that he observed the workings of the natural world and its human involvement. Returning later to transform them through his imagination. Hazlitt wrote also about this while on the road at the end of a day’s walking: “I am content to lay in a stock of ideas then, and to examine and atomise them afterwards” (Hazlitt 138).

Chiang opts for the solitary road, the name he chooses for his book, the Silent Traveller, is a reflection of this. The trip to the Lakes follows a disappointing coach tour to North Wales where, kind though his fellow travellers were, they never gave him a moment’s peace as they felt sorry for him being alone in a foreign land. He enjoys the solitary path when he arrives in Wasdale though soon finds that it is disturbed constantly by other hikers and cars, they bring him back to “town” and out of what he glimpses as “that great tranquillity” (Chiang 14). He walks over Sty Head Pass into Borrowdale, alone for the most part: “After a long time my tranquil mind was stirred to the consciousness of cars upon the main road; I started to walk again” (Ibid 29). However, he returns to his accommodation each evening and composes poems and paints landscapes, as he “recollects them in tranquillity.”

Wordsworth's solitary path is part of the resolution of his crisis, what is also essential is the role of friendship. Chiang meets an old friend in Keswick, Mrs Everett, who discusses painting with him, though the surprising addition to the tour is the chance meeting of a fellow individual traveller from China. He embarks on a number of his walks with this new friend, finding that "it was pleasant to have company to walk with after my long silent days in the Lakes" (Ibid 59). He talks to his friend in Chinese which appears to have the effect of lessening his homesickness and sense of alienation. However, the event that seems to transform Chiang's feelings occurs early in the trip while still in Wasdale. This is another element that finds a reference in Wordsworth's writing.

Spots of Time

In Book 11 of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth presents us with one of the great recurring elements of his poetry, the "spots of time."

There are in our existence spots of time,
Which with distinct pre-eminence retain
A renovating virtue, whence, depressed
By false opinion and contentious thought,
Or aught of heavier and more dreadful weight
In trivial occupations, and the round
Of ordinary intercourse, our minds
Are nourished and invisibly repaired. (Bk. 11, l. 258–265, 213)

The Prelude includes many of Wordsworth's "spots of time" and they feature particularly in the later books as he resolves his crisis, the most impressive being the "spot of time" that becomes the great visionary moment on the summit of Snowden, in North Wales, when he "sees" through the break in the cloud below: "in that breach / Through which the homeless voice of waters rose, / That dark deep thoroughfare, had Nature lodged / The Soul, the Imagination of the whole" (13, 62–65, 230). It is this moment that heals, renews and resolves the crisis for Wordsworth:

Hence sovereignty within and peace at will,
Emotion which best foresight need not fear,
Most worthy then of trust when most intense:
Hence cheerfulness in every act of life;

Hence truth in moral judgements and delight:
That fails not in the external universe. (13, 114-19, 232)

This union of the mind and the external world, this visionary process that binds the eye with the object it perceives, that unites the creative imagination with nature, that defamiliarises the familiar, the mundane, the habitual by recreating a sense of wonder; it is this refreshing force that lies at the heart of romantic poetry. It is also the force that transforms Chiang's feelings of despair in his Lake District journey. He too experiences the "spots of time," as he writes in his introduction: "So happy was that stretch of time that, even now, I often drive back my imagination to the weeks I spent there ... and rewrite some of the verses I roughly composed there, and make sketches from the scenes stored up in my mind. ... I think of those places in retrospect with a certain gilding of romanticism" (Chiang 3). This sounds like he is heavily indebted to Wordsworth, though Chiang does stress the Chinese nature of his vision, and it should be remembered that all of his poems and paintings of the Lake District are in a Chinese style, immediately creating an extraordinary difference to the native poetry and painting of the area. When in Wasdale Chiang comments on the way his culture affects how he sees:

"A Chinese phrase, *ling-lueh*" is a good one for expressing one's reaction if one is trying to analyse one's enjoyment of Nature. "Ling" mean "to perceive or to receive an impression" and "lueh" means "a sketch." These two words put together have the arbitrary meaning "to accept into the understanding," though it is difficult for me to find an exact English equivalent." (Ibid 26)

Chiang presents a number of these "*ling-lueh*" moments; while in his lodgings in Keswick he tries to recollect the details of Derwent Water: "Artists can never hope to paint the real Nature, but only one aspect of Nature reflected in their own eyes. Our Chinese artist tries to paint the Nature in his mind, not the Nature in Nature" (Ibid 45). The impression comes to him as the evening draws on and he paints the Lake. However, the most important "*ling-lueh*" or "spot of time" occurs at the beginning of his tour while he was still in Wasdale, and it is this that ensures the rest of the journey is not marked solely by depression.

He embarks on a walk up Scafell with a stranger though soon decides he wants to be alone and lets the other man walk on, he sits down on the brow of a hill and looks down through the rain clouds to the lake of Wastwater:

“The splendid scene filled me with joy! Before the rain began I had not really noted the differences of colour in sky and mountains, but now I sat to contemplate the immensity of Nature covered by these masses of grey and white particles ... My breath came with difficulty, my eyes were dazzled and my body grew stiff in amazement at the startling power of this mighty manifestation of Nature ... Within a few minutes the scene was transformed into something almost more wonderful than one can imagine ... For the instant I realised myself and my whole existence as a human being to be an infinitesimal part of this mighty Nature.” (Ibid 21–22)

This is Chiang’s great visionary moment when his imagination transforms a common scene into something of wonder; he responds physically to what he sees and how his imagination works or tries to and he recognises his own insignificant self in unity with the rest of the natural world. He does not mind the rain that is soaking him and will continue to do so for the rest of his trip, it is only natural, this is his world. His worries and anxiety will return but not overwhelm him. When he walks over to Borrowdale the following day, he writes: “My mind was quieter now than it had been at all, because I felt myself facing another world where there was no fear and no worry” (Ibid 26). He has passed through a transformative visionary moment, the tone of the narrative changes, he meets and befriends a Chinese traveller and even oversleeps in his hotel. He adds: “Now everything in the past has passed already, and what is to come I cannot foresee. But nature has never changed to me in moving from place to place; she differs only according to my changing states of mind” (Ibid 45). His guilt and depression concerned him throughout the trip but only when stationary or when someone interrupted his reveries.

Conclusion

For Wordsworth, the poem that follows chronologically from the early section of the first book of *The Prelude* is *Home at Grasmere*, and though Wordsworth was born in Cockermouth and not Grasmere, this move to Dove Cottage is a return to the region of his birth and upbringing. Wordsworth’s journey has been a circuitous one and the point that was made above about a sense of place and belonging, alongside the need to keep walking, finds its essence here in Grasmere. One need only read Dorothy Wordsworth’s *Grasmere Journal* to recognise this, where entry after entry includes the clause “we walked ...” along with all they read and all the people they met, chief among whom is, of course, Coleridge. Wordsworth’s poem about their home describes how

Something that makes this Spot,
This small abiding-place of many men,
A termination, and a last retreat,
A Centre, come from wheresoe'er you will,
A Whole without dependence or defect,
Made for itself, and happy in itself,
Perfect Contentment, Unity entire. (Wordsworth, 1984, l. 164–170, 178)

It would appear that Wordsworth has found happiness through his “walking cure” though it was only temporary. Life carried on with health and money worries, and the inconsolable grief at the death of his children. His cure is a process, not an end.

The journey is to a degree circuitous for Chiang too and he finishes where he originally set off, with Wordsworth. The final part of his narrative consists of his trip, or pilgrimage, to Dove Cottage in Grasmere. It is a disappointment for Chiang as he mixes with the crowd of tourists also visiting Dove Cottage; the magic is not there in the objects associated with Wordsworth, he is distracted by the crowds he was looking to escape. For him the traces of Wordsworth that really matter are in the hills around: “What interested me most were the surroundings which stimulated the poet to compose his poems and convey his ingenious thought” (Chiang 66). He records how regularly he is brought back to the chaos of urban living by other hikers, cars and tourists, and most directly by newspapers or talk of war. In spite of this, Chiang appears to find solace, however temporary, in his imaginative reveries in these surroundings. There is no “home” for him, he would remain an exile from his homeland. However, the “silent traveller” had only just begun with this journal of his Lakeland journey, many other “Silent Traveller” volumes were to follow; the visionary walk was a process for him too.

Both writers choose a series of walks or journeys to unify the chaos of their feelings, thoughts, visions and sensory perceptions, to provide a degree of coherence, of imaginative unity, the realisation of a way of seeing and creating. Both embark on what Hepburn and Murdoch refer to as “the moral endeavour as the realising of a pattern of life or the following out of a pilgrimage” (Hepburn and Murdoch 14). They use the journey to represent what makes up the self-fashioned “texture” and “vision” of their moral being. They follow a similar path but see across time and space differently. As Murdoch writes: “We differ not only because we select different objects out of the same world but because we see different worlds” (Ibid 41).

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