

The grasmere journals essay



Paul Masciocchi Dr.

Dianne Vipond ENGL 250B September 11, 2007 Critical Article Analysis: The Grasmere Journals There are many reoccurring themes, as well as extensive reasoning, behind much of what Dorothy Wordsworth writes in The Grasmere Journals and evidence of this was discovered after searching the Internet. An article by Jill Angelino, titled " Writing Against, Writing Through: ? Subjectivity, Vocation and Authorship in the Work of Dorothy Wordsworth", describes many of these in great detail. The theme Angelino discusses in greatest detail however, albeit the main reason for Dorothy keeping the journals in the first place, is Dorothy's relationship to her brother William and the voice she is given because of it. Upon departure of her brother to Yorkshire for example, she claims " I resolved to write a journal of the time till W & J return... & because I shall give Wm Pleasure by it when he comes home again". (DW, 392) William relied heavily on his sister's detailed accounts of nature scenes when writing poems and borrowed freely from her journals.

Angelino notes, " Through Dorothy, William receives support and achieves subjectivity and authorship". An example of this can be found in William's poem " I Wandered As Lonely As A Cloud" (WW, 305) when compared to an entry by Dorothy describing daffodils scattered through the Grasmere countryside. (DW, 396) The two parallel each other almost identically. Dorothy's depictions of nature as an attachment to her environment serve not only to aid William in his poetry, but also help in giving Dorothy a voice to express emotion toward William. Dorothy's journal, critics have noted,

presents a 'seeing eye'-not a 'subjective I'... instead her emotions are reflected in the details of nature as she catalogues her surroundings".

(Angelino) Examples of this are found when William leaves for Yorkshire and the landscape surrounding Grasmere becomes "dull and melancholy" (DW, 392) or when she is happy walking with William and everything becomes much more vibrant. The way she views the world around her seems to be dependant on her feelings toward William. This can also be seen in Dorothy's journal entry describing William's wedding morning. (DW, 401) "Through displacement of her negative emotion onto natural scene, which she refuses to analyze, and by constant reference to physical ailments, the journal she knew William would read thereby reveals encoded dissatisfaction—a mode of writing the self which allows Dorothy to express concern with William's impending marriage in ways that do not threaten her place in his heart and home. (Angelino) Her concern deals with her fear of being replaced in William's life and her journals allow her the voice to express this.

Lastly, given the time and the subordinate role women played in comparison to men, Angelino describes how The Grasmere Journals and the relationship between Dorothy and William allows Dorothy an unspoken role as a literary author; something reserved exclusively for men. ...Traces of Dorothy in William's work suggest that even as he writes through her, Dorothy's mediation of his writing facilitates a power dynamic in which she can write herself through him". (Angelino) Whether or not implicit, it seems that Dorothy is well aware of the influence she has on William and what this could possibly mean for her. I found Jill Angelino's critique of The Grasmere

Journals to not only be helpful in understanding the text but extremely insightful as well.

As much of it was based on literal interpretation, it was hard to find disagreements with any her evaluations. Angelino's analysis showed very concretely how Dorothy's journals were vital to both the relationship she shared with her brother and the success of William Wordsworth as one of the greatest poets of the Romantic period. Citation: " Writing Against, Writing Through: ? Subjectivity, Vocation and Authorship in the Work of Dorothy Wordsworth. " [Im]positions: Issue #1. Jill Angelino.

1996. <http://www.gwu.edu/~position/jill.html>