

## Mapping 'Wordsworthshire'

Donaldson, Christopher; Gregory, Ian; Murrieta-Flores, Patricia

DOI:

[10.1080/13555502.2015.1058089](https://doi.org/10.1080/13555502.2015.1058089)

License:

Creative Commons: Attribution (CC BY)

*Document Version*

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

*Citation for published version (Harvard):*

Donaldson, C, Gregory, I & Murrieta-Flores, P 2015, 'Mapping 'Wordsworthshire': a GIS study of literary tourism in Victorian Lakeland', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, vol. 20, no. 3, pp. 287-307.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13555502.2015.1058089>

[Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal](#)

### General rights

Unless a licence is specified above, all rights (including copyright and moral rights) in this document are retained by the authors and/or the copyright holders. The express permission of the copyright holder must be obtained for any use of this material other than for purposes permitted by law.

- Users may freely distribute the URL that is used to identify this publication.
- Users may download and/or print one copy of the publication from the University of Birmingham research portal for the purpose of private study or non-commercial research.
- User may use extracts from the document in line with the concept of 'fair dealing' under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (?)
- Users may not further distribute the material nor use it for the purposes of commercial gain.

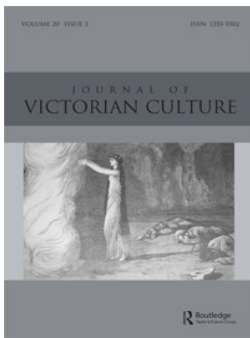
Where a licence is displayed above, please note the terms and conditions of the licence govern your use of this document.

When citing, please reference the published version.

### Take down policy

While the University of Birmingham exercises care and attention in making items available there are rare occasions when an item has been uploaded in error or has been deemed to be commercially or otherwise sensitive.

If you believe that this is the case for this document, please contact [UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk](mailto:UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk) providing details and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate.



## Mapping 'Wordsworthshire': A GIS Study of Literary Tourism in Victorian Lakeland

Christopher Donaldson, Ian N. Gregory & Patricia Murrieta-Flores

**To cite this article:** Christopher Donaldson, Ian N. Gregory & Patricia Murrieta-Flores (2015) Mapping 'Wordsworthshire': A GIS Study of Literary Tourism in Victorian Lakeland, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 20:3, 287-307, DOI: [10.1080/13555502.2015.1058089](https://doi.org/10.1080/13555502.2015.1058089)

**To link to this article:** <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13555502.2015.1058089>



© 2015 The Author(s). Published by Taylor & Francis.



Published online: 14 Aug 2015.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 1539



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

## Mapping ‘Wordsworthshire’: A GIS Study of Literary Tourism in Victorian Lakeland

Christopher Donaldson, Ian N. Gregory and Patricia Murrieta-Flores

### I. Seeking Wordsworthshire

Not least among many items of interest in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *English Notebooks* is the account of the trip the author took to the Lake District during the summer of 1855. Like most Victorian tourists travelling to the Lakes from Liverpool (where Hawthorne was stationed as the American consul), he and his family came to the region largely to recover their health. Two years of living in Liverpool, with its coal dust and damp, had taken their toll on his wife’s constitution and his mood, and they had both come to regard the town as a ‘black and miserable hole.’<sup>1</sup> ‘The most detestable place’, grumbled Hawthorne, ‘that ever my lot was cast in – smoky, noisy, dirty, [and] pestilential.’<sup>2</sup> So, putting the muddy waters of the Mersey behind them, he and his family mainly spent the first days of their holiday enjoying the fresh air and pleasant scenery near the foot of Windermere. But fresh air and pleasant scenery were not the only attractions that drew the Hawthornes to the Lake District. Like many Victorian tourists, they had also come to indulge in a bit of literary sightseeing. Earlier that summer Hawthorne had taken his family to Leamington Spa, whence they had gone on a pilgrimage to Shakespeare’s cottage in Stratford. While returning to Liverpool two weeks later, moreover, the author had put aside two days to take in Samuel Johnson’s birthplace in Lichfield, as well as the site of the Doctor’s penance in Uttoxeter’s market square. Given this predilection for visiting places linked to Britain’s literary past, it may come as little surprise that, soon after arriving in the Lakes, the Hawthornes set out to see the homes and haunts of the late Poet Laureate, William Wordsworth.

Wordsworth was hardly the only literary celebrity that Hawthorne’s contemporaries would have associated with the Lake District. Writers ranging from Thomas Gray to Susanna Blamire, to say nothing of John Wilson, Felicia Hemans, and Sir Walter Scott, had also left their marks on the landscape, as had Wordsworth’s fellow ‘Lake Poets’: Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey. There were, besides, figures like Thomas de Quincey, Charles Lloyd, and Hartley Coleridge to consider. By the mid

- 
1. Nathaniel Hawthorne to H. A. Bright, 5 July 1855, in *The Letters 1853–1856*, ed. by Thomas Woodson, James A. Rubino, L. Neal Smith, and Norman Holmes Pearson, *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, 23 vols (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987), xvii, 362.
  2. *Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, xvii, 119.

1850s, moreover, a new generation of authors, including Matthew Arnold and Harriet Martineau, had put down roots in the region. Even Elizabeth Gaskell, who regularly holidayed in nearby Silverdale, could fairly be counted among the ranks of the local worthies. Yet, above all other authors and artists, it was Wordsworth who continued to prevail in the public eye as the pre-eminent luminary of the Lakes. Quoted in guidebooks, many of which referred to his own bestselling *Guide to the Lakes*, Wordsworth's words were credited with casting an 'imperishable lustre' on the district's scenery.<sup>3</sup> Consulted by tourists, his works were assiduously mapped onto the terrain. By the time of Hawthorne's visit, this associative fusion of poet and place had become absolute, making the Lake District one of England's foremost literary localities. A region long prized for its picturesque scenery was now, as Keith Hanley has noted, renowned as a poetic demesne: 'an imaginatively privileged area, whose significance depended principally on Wordsworth's exemplary presence'.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, as Hawthorne's countryman James Russell Lowell affirmed in 1854, tourists who travelled to the Lakes during the mid-nineteenth century did so in order to visit 'Wordsworthshire', a 'literary country' consecrated by the works of a single poet and his circle.<sup>5</sup>

Chief among the attractions of Victorian Wordsworthshire was Rydal Mount, the house where the poet had resided with his family from 1813 until his death in 1850. Like Scott's Abbotsford and Thomas Hardy's Max Gate, Rydal Mount holds a distinction among Britain's literary shrines for having become a place of mass pilgrimage during its 'saintly' inhabitant's lifetime.<sup>6</sup> 'There was', to quote one period commentator, 'a magnet in the very name of Rydal Mount', and as the century wore on, that magnet's pull increased with Wordsworth's prestige.<sup>7</sup> As early as 1820, after all, one hears of tourists occasionally being seen 'peeping in at' the poet's windows, or requesting 'to see [his] Study'.<sup>8</sup> By 1838, however, upwards of 'twenty and thirty people' were reported to be visiting 'the Mount' each summer's day.<sup>9</sup> A decade later, at the height of Wordsworth's fame, it was estimated that 'the average number of

---

3. James B. Pyne, *Lake Scenery of England* (London: Day & Son, 1859), p. v.

4. Keith Hanley, 'The Imaginative Visitor: Wordsworth and the Romantic Construction of Literary Tourism in the Lake District', in *The Making of a Cultural Landscape: The English Lake District as Tourist Destination, 1750–2010*, ed. by John K. Walton and Jason Wood (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 113–31 (p. 125).

5. James Russell Lowell, 'Sketch of Wordsworth's Life', in *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, 7 vols (Boston: Little, Brown, 1854), 1, xxxviii. On the phenomenon of the 'literary country', see Nicola Watson, *The Literary Tourist: Readers and Places in Romantic and Victorian Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 169–70.

6. Stephen Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 11.

7. Thomas Cooper, 'A Reminiscence of Wordsworth', *Cooper's Journal*, 1 (1850), 291–92, 324–25 (p. 291).

8. Sara Hutchinson to Mary Wordsworth, 19 September 1820, in *The Letters of Sara Hutchinson from 1800–1835*, ed. by Kathleen Coburn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1954), pp. 201, 189.

9. Isabella Fenwick to Henry Taylor, 18 August 1838, in *The Correspondence of Henry Taylor*, ed. by Edward Dowden (London: Longman, 1888), p. 94.

strangers who called [...] in the course of the season was eight hundred'.<sup>10</sup> These latter figures may be slightly exaggerated, as they seem to have been intended as much to astonish as to inform.<sup>11</sup> But, in the absence of more precise records, they can nevertheless be seen to indicate a general trend: namely that during the 1830s and 1840s an ever-increasing flock of pilgrims was passing by Rydal Mount in the hope of catching a glimpse of the poet. Those travellers who were lucky enough to be received by Wordsworth himself certainly made a point of commemorating the occasion. Some, such as Richard Howitt, were inspired to do so in verse: 'Cheered by the Poet's hospitable smile, | I breathe the air of the song-hallowed pile, | With but half faith what is can really be.'<sup>12</sup>

For most Victorian tourists, however, it was not Wordsworth's 'song-hallowed pile' so much as his terraced garden that served as Rydal Mount's main attraction. Wordsworth's garden – long renowned for its scenic vistas – was, after all, the one part of the property that the public could readily access. It was, moreover, widely known to have been laid out by Wordsworth himself, and thus considered by many to bear the imprint of his genius.<sup>13</sup> In this way, as Scott Hess has suggested, the property presented the literary pilgrim with the 'prospect' not only of admiring Wordsworth's view, but also of actually 'sharing the poet's viewpoint, and thus magically sharing something of his consciousness as well'.<sup>14</sup> But this was not the only source of the garden's appeal. For, in addition to bearing trees and shrubs planted by the poet's own hands, Wordsworth's garden was also steeped in literary significance. Over the latter half of his career, after all, Wordsworth had repeatedly publicized this private space as a place of poetic self-fashioning. Notably, in his valedictory sonnet 'Adieu, Rydalian Laurels!' he had portrayed himself as a gardener 'braid[ing] | Ground-flowers' beneath the 'shelter' of his 'household bowers'.<sup>15</sup> Elsewhere, in an inscription composed for one of his terraces, he had celebrated the 'humble walk[s]' where he daily wandered, 'scattering to the heedless winds | The vocal raptures of fresh poesy'.<sup>16</sup> These poems, both of which appeared in 1835, evidently made an impression on Wordsworth's readership for, within a year of their publication, at least one passer-by was overheard outside the poet's gates urging her companion to 'get on the wall & snatch a sprig of laurel, or

10. Harriet Martineau, 'Lights of the English Lake District', *Atlantic Monthly*, 7 (1861), 541–58 (p. 550).

11. Notably, in her *Autobiography*, Martineau mentions that when she 'came into the district', in 1845, she 'was told that the average of utter strangers who visited Rydal Mount in the season was five hundred'. See *Harriet Martineau's Autobiography*, 3 vols (London: Smith, Elder, 1877), II, 241.

12. Richard Howitt, *The Gipsy King; and Other Poems* (London: Thomas Arnold, 1840), p. 87.

13. See, especially, Saeko Yoshikawa, *William Wordsworth and the Invention of Tourism, 1820–1900* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 102–13.

14. Scott Hess, *William Wordsworth and the Ecology of Authorship: The Roots of Environmentalism in Nineteenth-Century Culture* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012), p. 81.

15. William Wordsworth, *Yarrow Revisited, and Other Poems* (London: Longman and Edward Moxon, 1835), p. 187.

16. Wordsworth, *Yarrow Revisited*, p. 78.

anything; we *must* take something away'.<sup>17</sup> Amusing though it may have seemed at the time, this petty theft was only a sign of things to come. It is certainly 'fortunate', as Stephen Gill has surmised, 'that shrubs grow abundantly in Cumbria'.<sup>18</sup> Soon much bigger bands of relic hunters were ascending the hill to Rydal Mount each summer. In August 1848, for instance, the poet's son-in-law reported having seen a swarm of 'no fewer than 50, or 60' votaries rummaging 'all over the terraces', each presumably in search of their own souvenir sprig.<sup>19</sup>

Such pruning parties were still in vogue when the Hawthornes arrived in the Lakes seven years later. So it comes as little surprise that, when, on their way through Rydal, the family's driver identified a house near 'the foot of the lake' as the home of the late 'Mr. Wordsworth', they dropped off their baggage and returned at once to pinch their own keepsakes from the poet's garden. According to Hawthorne, upon:

[r]eaching the house that had been pointed out to us as Wordsworth's residence, we began to peer about, at its front and gables, and over the garden wall on both sides of the road – quickening up our enthusiasm as much as we could, and meditating to pilfer some flower or ivy-leaf from the house or its vicinity, to be kept as sacred memorials. At this juncture a man approached, who announced himself as the gardener of the place, and said that he could show us Wordsworth's garden; – and said, too, that this was not Wordsworth's house at all, but the residence of Mr. Ball, a Quaker gentleman; – but that his grounds adjoined Wordsworth's, and that he had liberty to take visitors through the latter. How queer, if we should have carried away ivy-leaves and tender recollections from the domicile of a respectable Quaker!<sup>20</sup>

Now, although it is perfectly possible to suppose that Hawthorne had mistaken his driver's meaning, his notebook frankly suggests that he had been misinformed. Rydal Mount, after all, sits not along the lakeshore but perched on the side of Nab Scar, some 200 yards uphill from the main road. Indeed, given how minutely the approach to Wordsworth's 'mountain home' is described in the guidebooks that the Hawthornes had read, it is a little surprising that they came so close to ransacking the wrong garden.<sup>21</sup> However that may be, the particulars of Hawthorne's account are less

17. Edward Quillinan, diary entry, 1 September 1836 (MS Wordsworth Library); quoted in Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians*, p. 10.

18. Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians*, p. 11.

19. Edward Quillinan to Henry Crabb Robinson, 12 August 1848, in *The Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson with the Wordsworth Circle, 1806–1866*, ed. by Edith J. Morley, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), II, 677.

20. Hawthorne, *The English Notebooks 1853–1856*, ed. by Thomas Woodson and Bill Ellis, *The Centenary Edition*, XXI, 248. The Quaker in question was, of course, the poet William Ball, who became the Wordsworths' neighbour in 1835.

21. See, for example, Harriet Martineau, *A Complete Guide to the English Lakes* (Windermere: John Garnett, 1855), pp. 53–54: 'When the turn to the left, which leads up that [hill] is reached, the stranger must alight, and ascend it. He is ascending Rydal Mount: and Wordsworth's house is at the top of the hill, – within the modest gate on the left.' Hawthorne's notebooks suggest that he and his family were familiar with Martineau's *Complete Guide*, which was published just a few months before his arrival in the Lakes. See, notably, *The Centenary Edition*, XXI, 234, 272, 591.

important than the general truth it affirms. Namely, that even after Wordsworth's death, many of his admirers still wished to commune with the places where he had lived and about which he had written. 'The spots which recall him survive,' as Matthew Arnold famously proclaimed, 'for he lent a new life to these hills.'<sup>22</sup> But of all the spots cherished by Wordsworth's Victorian readers, none was more revered in the years immediately following the poet's death than the grounds of Rydal Mount. This place, the scene of Wordsworth's 'long seclusion from the busy world,' was more than a mere shrine to his memory; it was a site where visitors could – quite literally – walk in his footsteps.<sup>23</sup> To enter its precinct was, as Samuel and Maria Hall later avowed, to tread where the poet's spirit 'was more palpably present' than anywhere else.<sup>24</sup> Hawthorne's experience would certainly seem to bear out this assertion. He records not only that his family, having been led to the right garden, collected the 'sacred memorials' they sought ('a cone [...] some mignonette [*sic*], and leaves of laurel and ivy'), but also that, for his part, he could not help but feel 'pleasure' at having the chance to stroll where Wordsworth once strolled 'in quiet days past [...] training flowers, and trimming shrubs, and chaunting in an under-tone his own verses, up and down the undulating walks.'<sup>25</sup> The poems of 20 years earlier had evidently left their mark on his memory.

For literary pilgrims like the Hawthornes, Rydal Mount was the bud around which all of the Lake District's Wordsworthian associations unfolded. Today, of course, tourists are apt to overlook the house and its gardens altogether, being drawn instead to Dove Cottage, near Grasmere, where the poet and his sister Dorothy settled in 1799, and which in time, as Stephen Hebron has shown, would surpass the Wordsworths' Victorian home as the region's chief literary shrine.<sup>26</sup> Be that as it may, throughout the bulk of the Victorian era, it was Rydal Mount that was known far and wide as 'the crowning honour of the district,' the local seat of literary celebrity par excellence.<sup>27</sup> Publicized as Wordsworth's address from the appearance of *The Excursion* in 1814, and widely displayed both in souvenir prints and on the title page of his *Poetical Works*, the house and its garden were the most iconic of the various landmarks on which he drew to portray himself as 'a Poet living in retirement.'<sup>28</sup> Consequently, as William J. Loftie

22. Matthew Arnold, *Empedocles on Etna, and Other Poems* (London: Fellowes, 1852), p. 209.

23. Charles Mackay, *The Scenery and Poetry of the English Lakes: A Summer Ramble* (London: Longman, 1846), p. 41.

24. Samuel Carter Hall and Anna Maria Hall, 'Memoirs of the Authors of the Age: William Wordsworth,' *The Art-Journal*, n.s., 5 (1866), 245–49, 273–77 (p. 274).

25. *The Centenary Edition*, XXI, 250.

26. Stephen Hebron, *Dove Cottage* (Grasmere: Wordsworth Trust, 2009), pp. 75–86. On the 'gradual eclipse' of Rydal Mount by Dove Cottage, and its relationship to the canonization of Wordsworth's early poetry, see also Yoshikawa, *Wordsworth and the Invention of Tourism*, pp. 120–24, 203–4.

27. Harriet Martineau, 'The Lake District,' in *The Land We Live In: A Pictorial and Literary Sketch-Book of the British Empire*, ed. by Charles Knight, 4 vols (London: Charles Knight, 1847), II, 217–56 (p. 223).

28. William Wordsworth, *The Excursion, Being a Portion of The Recluse, A Poem* (London: Longman, 1814), p. ix.

averred, it was ‘with Rydal Mount’ that Wordsworth’s name was ‘more intimately connected than with any other place.’<sup>29</sup>

Yet, for all its pre-eminence, Rydal Mount was not the only spot frequented by those Victorian tourists who wished to visit the scenes of Wordsworth’s life and works. Indeed, as Samantha Matthews has shown, the poet’s former home was closely seconded in prestige by his final resting place in St Oswald’s churchyard, in Grasmere, where Hawthorne also paused to collect a few memorial clippings (‘I plucked some grass and weeds [ . . . ] from just above his head’).<sup>30</sup> Other places, such as the nearby village of Hawkshead (the scene of the poet’s school days) also received a fair share of attention, as did various sites along the course of the Duddon (the river celebrated in Wordsworth’s famous sonnets).<sup>31</sup> There were, moreover, locations like Kirkstone Pass, which Hawthorne duly remembered as the scene of the ‘aspiring road’ described in Wordsworth’s ‘Ode: The Pass of Kirkstone’, or even whole mountains, like Helvellyn, which he had immortalized in his earlier poem ‘Fidelity’.<sup>32</sup> Nor were the sites noted by Wordsworth’s Victorian readers confined to the central and southern Lakeland fells. In fact, as a survey of two dozen exemplary Victorian tourist publications and travel books from the Spatial Humanities project’s digital library of Lakeland literature confirms, at least 160 other locations throughout the region, from Kendal to Cockermouth and from Brougham Castle to St Bees, also had Wordsworthian connections deemed worthy of the reader’s attention and esteem.<sup>33</sup>

29. William J. Loftie, *Gems of Home Scenery: Views in the English Lake District from Original Drawings by T. L. Rowbotham* (London: Marcus Ward, 1875), p. 60.

30. Samantha Matthews, *Poetical Remains: Poets’ Graves, Bodies, and Books in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 154–88; the quotation is from *The Centenary Edition*, XXI, 252.

31. See, on this topic, Christopher Donaldson, ‘Down the Duddon: Wordsworth and his Literary Pilgrims’, *Literary Imagination*, 15 (2013), 186–209.

32. *The Centenary Edition*, XXI, 258, 284.

33. This sample comprises all of the Victorian-era publications in the Spatial Humanities project’s digital library of Lakeland literature, which is an open-access collection of exemplary works, from a variety of genres and historical periods, about the Lake District. In addition to Mackay’s *Scenery and Poetry* and Martineau’s *Complete Guide and ‘Lights of the English Lake District’*, which are cited above, it includes: James Thorne, ‘The Duddon’, in *Rambles by Rivers* (London: Charles Knight, 1844), pp. 9–37; Alexander C. Gibson, *The Old Man; or Ravings and Ramblings round Coniston* (London: Whittaker and Kendal: Hudson, 1849); *Keswick and its Neighbourhood: A Hand-book for the Use of Visitors* (Windermere: Garnett and London: Whittaker, 1852); James Freeman Clarke, *Eleven Weeks in Europe; and What May be Seen in that Time* (Boston: Ticknor, Reed, and Fields, 1852), pp. 46–51; *Black’s Shilling Guide to the Lake District* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1853); *The English Lakes* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1857); Edwin Waugh, *Over Sands to the Lakes* (Manchester: Ireland, 1860) and *Rambles in the Lake Country and its Borders* (Manchester: John Heywood and London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1861); *Our English Lakes, Mountains, and Waterfalls, as Seen by William Wordsworth* ed. by Alfred W. Bennett (London: Bennett, 1864); William Dickinson, *Cumbriana: Or Fragments of Cumbrian Life* (London: Whittaker and Whitehaven: Callander and Dixon, 1876); William Knight, *The English Lake District as Interpreted in the Poems of William Wordsworth* (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1878); Henry Frith, ‘Wanderings in Wordsworthshire’, *Golden Hours*, 14 (1881),



When viewed in light of this long list of places, Hawthorne's visit to Rydal appears as what it is: one of a multitude of attempts to read Wordsworth back onto the locations where he had lived and from which he had drawn inspiration. The consolidation of this literary landscape in Victorian guidebooks and in annotated editions of Wordsworth's works has been extensively, if not exhaustively, elaborated elsewhere.<sup>34</sup> But what is generally less well appreciated – even surprising – is the sheer number and the range of different locations that landscape comprised. Indeed, as Saeko Yoshikawa has recently insisted, we should be careful not to underestimate the lengths Victorian guidebooks were willing to go 'to locate [Wordsworth's] poems in the landscape of the district'.<sup>35</sup> Nor for that matter, she continues, should we ignore the extent to which the proliferation of the region's transportation network enabled Victorian tourists to venture further afield: 'Then as now' the Windermere ferry helped tourists 'from Bowness [...] make their ways to Hawkshead and Coniston', and the railway 'facilitated travel to [...] Furness Abbey, Black Combe, and the Duddon Valley'. 'Then as now', Yoshikawa concludes, 'the coastal line took passengers to St Bees'.<sup>36</sup> As a consequence, instead of merely being familiar with Rydal Mount and its environs, well-informed Victorian tourists were aware of Wordsworthian places located not only in the centre of the Lake District, but also around its periphery.

Taking these various locations into account significantly broadens our conception of the boundaries of Wordsworthshire. Instead of envisioning a poetic demesne comprising only a handful of key locations, we begin to conceive of a literary landscape that extends outwards across the better part of the greater Lakeland region. Following on from Yoshikawa's observations about transportation, moreover, we can also begin to conceive of a literary landscape whose shape was determined not only by the broader geography of Wordsworth's works, but also by the contours of the local waterways, roadways, and railways that afforded the literary tourist access to the poet's world. Wordsworthshire, it would seem, was both spatially extensive and intensive: a territory defined both by a wide distribution of places and by the presence of corridors or pathways that gathered certain places together. This is an illuminating insight. Equally, however, it is one that presents us with an interpretive challenge. For

---

419–26; John Burroughs, 'In Wordsworth Country', *The Century Magazine*, 27 (1884), 418–21; C. N. Williamson, 'The Climbs of the English Lake District', *All the Year Round*, 35 (1884), 77–82, 110–14; William G. Collingwood, *Coniston Tales* (Ulverston: William Holmes, 1889); Fredrick Amadeus Malleon, *Holiday Studies of Wordsworth by Rivers, Woods, and Alps* (London: Cassell, 1890), pp. 53–75; Samuel Barber, *Beneath Helvellyn's Shade: Notes and Sketches in the Valley of Wythburn* (London: Elliot Stock, 1892); Herbert Rix, 'Down the Duddon with Wordsworth', *Leisure Hour*, 12 (1893), 532–59; Ellis Yarnall, 'Walks and Visits in Wordsworth Country', *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, 18 (1876), 543–54, 660–65; Hardwicke Drummond Rawnsley, *A Coach-Drive at the Lakes: Windermere to Keswick, and the Buttermere Round* (Keswick: Bakewell, 1902); and *Black's Shilling Guide to the English Lakes*, ed. by Mountford J. B. Baddley (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1900).

34. See, most recently, Yoshikawa, *Wordsworth and the Invention of Tourism* and Hess, *William Wordsworth and the Ecology of Authorship*, pp. 68–115.

35. Yoshikawa, *Wordsworth and the Invention of Tourism*, p. 7.

36. Yoshikawa, *Wordsworth and the Invention of Tourism*, p. 9.

although documenting the associations of each of the places that comprised Victorian Wordsworthshire is a fairly straightforward task, doing so tells us relatively little about how these places relate to one another or to the physical geography of the Lake District itself. Enumerating the different sites mentioned in Hawthorne's account, for example, may clue us into the importance of Rydal Mount or St Oswald's as places of literary pilgrimage; however, it does not in itself help us to evaluate how their popularity as tourist destinations may have been influenced by their proximity to other places of interest or their accessibility. Nor, for that matter, does a listing of key locations allow us to assess the place those locations occupy within the wider constellation of the region's cultural landmarks. These kinds of spatial and relational details are difficult to determine through the reading of individual accounts, but they are precisely the sorts of details to which mapping – especially mapping aided by Geographic Information Systems (or GIS) technologies – can alert us. Such technologies, as we shall see, facilitate new reading practices that help us to assess multiple accounts comparatively and, geographically, to uncover hidden relations between them.

## II. Mapping Wordsworthshire

The general application of GIS technologies in the humanities has occurred recently enough to justify a few words of introduction. Essentially, GIS are computer systems that facilitate the arrangement, visualization, and analysis of geographic information – or, in other words, data about specific locations.<sup>37</sup> Like satellite navigation systems and virtual globes, GIS have a map-based interface that, among other things, enables one to create spatial features, to calculate their proximity, and to gauge their dimension, scope, and scale. Unlike most cognate technologies, however, GIS are also database management systems that assist with the organization, storage, and retrieval of information. They are, accordingly, not only effective tools for integrating data from different sources, but also for representing those data both in a tabular format and in a digital mapping environment. This compound functionality distinguishes GIS as unparalleled resources for compiling information about particular locations and for assessing how the attributes assigned to those locations vary from place to place. Given this, it may come as little surprise that GIS have traditionally been associated with quantitative research in the environmental and social sciences, and particularly in fields that draw on large amounts of statistical data to analyse the geography underlying specific events and phenomena. Clearly, however, GIS also have the potential to aid research in the humanities, especially studies such as this one, which seeks to reconstruct and examine the geographies of nineteenth-century literary tourism.<sup>38</sup> Still, as was recently noted in this journal's Digital Forum, 'the full research potential of

---

37. For an overview of GIS, see Ian Gregory, *A Place in History: A Guide to Using GIS in Historical Research* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2003); Ian Gregory and Paul Ell, *Historical GIS: Technologies, Methodologies and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and *An Introduction to Geographical Information Systems*, ed. by Ian Heyward, Sarah Cornelius, and Steve Carver, 4th edn (Harlow: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2011).

GIS' for humanities scholarship as yet needs to be substantiated through interdisciplinary research.<sup>39</sup> The application of GIS in this article thus represents an important step forward in that it aspires to answer this need. In what follows, then, our objective is twofold. First and foremost, our aim is to build on the foregoing discussion of literary tourism in the Lake District by demonstrating how, in facilitating geographical visualization, GIS can help to guide critical inquiry by highlighting specific spatial patterns for further analysis. Secondly, in doing so, we aim to exemplify how GIS can be meaningfully implemented in literary-historical research.

Consider, with this in mind, the dot map displayed in [Figure 1](#), which shows the location of every place in the greater Lakeland region associated with Wordsworth in the sample of two dozen Victorian tourist publications and travel books mentioned above. Wordsworthshire, when surveyed in this way, appears to cover a fair bit of ground: more ground, indeed, than one might expect given the concentration of the contemporary Wordsworth industry around Grasmere. Instead of a single centralized space, we see here a scattered pattern of place-marks that spreads over a significant portion of the region. Many of these place-marks, such as the one for Black Combe, stand in relative isolation. Others, however, such as the ones along the banks of the Duddon, form clusters that follow the contours of the terrain. In so many words, at first glance it seems that Wordsworthshire comprises not only individual outstanding places, but also micro-regional groupings of significant sites.

Dot maps, when used in this manner, offer an elegantly simple way to study the distribution of different locations. As interpretive tools, however, they do have their limitations. By and large this is because they depict each place marked on the map in an identical fashion and, therefore, tend to obscure qualitative differences between them. Gauging qualities such as the number of times an individual place is represented on the map is particularly challenging, especially since GIS applications superimpose multiple place-marks in the same location. Consequently, a dataset may contain multiple references to a particular location and only one reference to another, but on a dot map this difference will not be distinguishable to the naked eye. Another difficulty with dot maps is that they unhelpfully give the impression that each place marked on the map is located in a single, precise location. This can be misleading, especially if the place in question happens to be a lake or a mountain, and thus to extend over a significant amount of space. In order to overcome such representational limitations, geographic information scientists employ spatial analysis techniques, such as density smoothing, which is a standard method for visualizing the relative frequency – and, therefore, prominence – of the various places or areas represented on the map. The technicalities of this process have been

---

38. See, notably, David J. Bodenhamer, John Corrigan, and Trevor M. Harris, eds, *The Spatial Humanities: GIS and the Future of Humanities Scholarship* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010).

39. Ian Gregory and David Cooper, 'Geographic Technologies and the Interdisciplinary Study of Peoples and Cultures of the Past', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 18 (2013), 265–72 (p. 265).

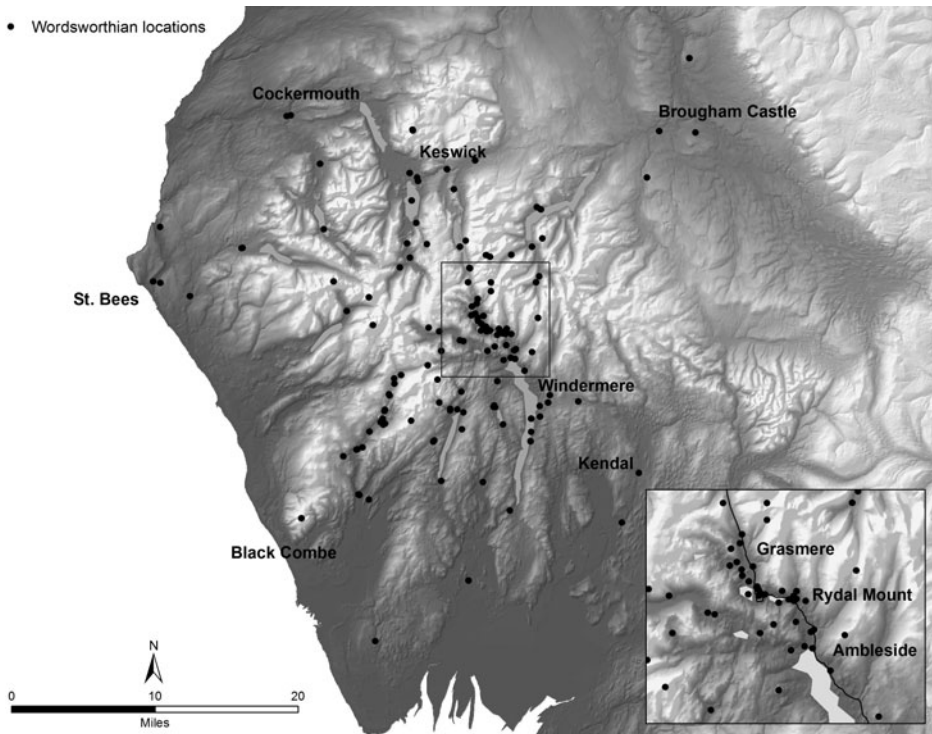


Figure 1. Dot map displaying the location of the places associated with Wordsworth in the Victorian Lake District tourist publications included in the Spatial Humanities project's digital library of Lakeland literature. Note: In all, these publications connect the poet to 164 specific locations a total of 529 times. Source: The Authors; created with ArcGIS © ESRI, 2015.

lucidly explained elsewhere.<sup>40</sup> For the present purposes, it is suffice to say that the more times an individual place appears, the denser the clustering – and the darker the colouration – of the concentric circles around it. The maps thus created, though seemingly less precise, are thus not only easier to interpret, but also have the merit of not misleadingly implying that each place-mark accurately represents the exact position of each location.

Accordingly, if we adjust the map in [Figure 1](#) to display the frequency with which each of the various locations mentioned in connection with Wordsworth occurs (see [Figure 2](#)), then a rather different pattern begins to emerge. Instead of being spatially diffuse, here Wordsworthshire is shown to be a densely concentrated geographical entity surrounded by several satellite locations. One does, to be sure, find references to outlying sites, such as Brougham Castle, Blackcombe, and St Bees. At the same time, however, most (57%) of the places affiliated with Wordsworth are shown to be located within a mile and a half of Rydal Mount, with the rest falling well within the boundaries of the modern Lake District National Park. Notably, references to Rydal

40. For a detailed explanation, see Christopher D. Lloyd, *Local Models for Spatial Analysis* (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2007).

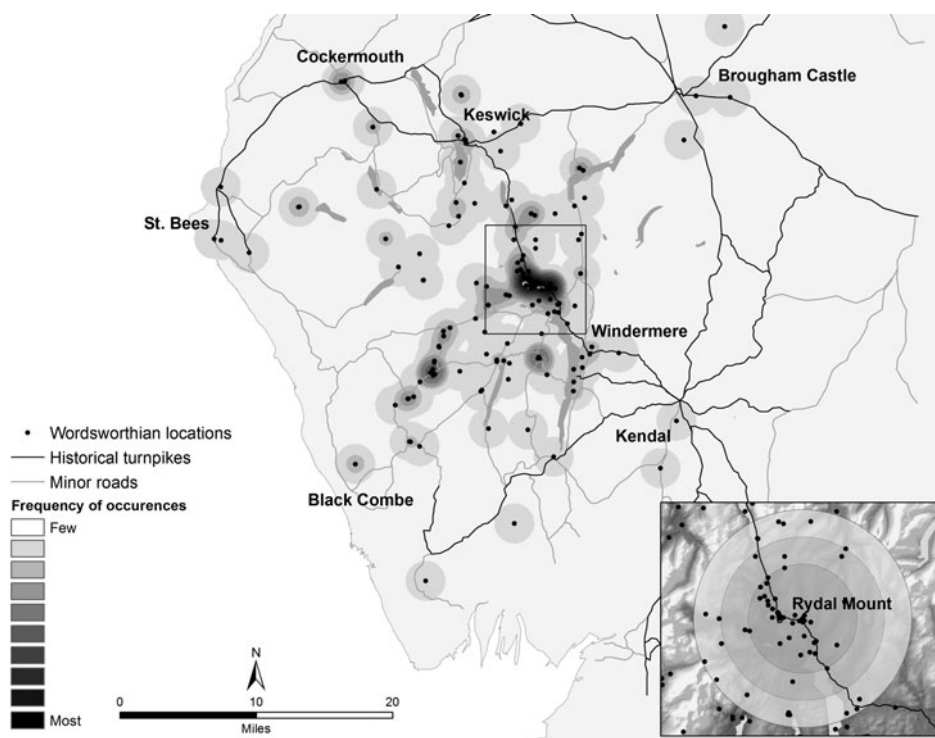


Figure 2. Density smoothed rendering of the dot map in Figure 1. Note: As the cut-away map illustrates, 41% of the places represented in Figure 1 are located within half a mile of Rydal Mount. A total of 44% are found within one mile; 57% fall within one and a half miles. Source: The Authors; created with ArcGIS © ESRI, 2015.

Mount, the most frequently mentioned location, alone account for nearly 10% of the total. Grasmere and St Oswald's churchyard, the next two most frequently mentioned locations, account for 5% and 4% of the total respectively. The Wordsworths' earlier home, Dove Cottage, which began to feature regularly in Lake District tourist publications in the 1870s, accounts for just 2% overall.

These percentages help us to make an important qualification to our initial interpretations of the dot map displayed in Figure 1. In doing so, they also confirm, challenge, and extend knowledge about Victorian literary tourism in the Lake District. Specifically, they suggest that whereas some Victorian tourists were as venturesome as Yoshikawa asserts in seeking out remote sites of literary interest, the books and essays that the bulk of their contemporaries would have encountered in fact mainly directed their attention (at least as far as Wordsworth was concerned) to a cluster of locations in the south-eastern half of the district. In effect, as the maps indicate, these publications helped to encourage the development of a more-or-less standardized Wordsworthian tour that gave prominence to places such as Hawkshead, Grasmere, and Rydal: the places where the poet had passed the better part of his days. Accordingly, even though Victorian tourists evidently regarded Wordsworth as the presiding genius of the whole Lakes region, Wordsworthshire (as perceived through the tourist publications of the

period) seems to have principally comprised locations in the old county of Westmorland and the district of Furness. Equivalent sites in the poet's native Cumberland – including his birthplace in Cockermouth – were, comparatively speaking, fewer and farther between.<sup>41</sup>

Taken in turn, the maps in Figures 1 and 2 thus help us to appreciate that although Victorian Wordsworthshire was more spatially extensive than we might suspect, it was nonetheless mainly concentrated around a handful of key locations. Taken together, however, these two maps call our attention to an aspect of the region's geography that is of even greater importance. In particular, they help us to perceive that although these Victorian tourist publications may vary somewhat in their recommended itineraries, their accounts of the literary geography of the Lake District were evidently influenced by the region's road network. Almost all of the Wordsworthian locations to which they direct the reader's attention, after all, either fall along or are at least visible from the Lakeland's main routes, roadways, and mountain passes. Indeed, as the maps presented above illustrate, although some more intrepid tourists and guidebook writers did take in the Wordsworthian sites of the region's remoter valleys (such as Dunnerdale, Ennerdale, and Wasdale), more than three-quarters of the places that Victorian tourist publications regularly affiliated with Wordsworth follow the contours of the Lake District's principal coach roads. Although this may initially seem unsurprising, it is nonetheless of manifest importance as a reminder that the experience of touring the Lakes in the mid- to late nineteenth century was one as much defined by the experience of travel as it was by individual locations. What is even more outstanding, with this in mind, however, is that nearly half of the locations associated with Wordsworth, in fact, fall along one single stretch of road: the old turnpike from Kendal to Keswick, which, for the most part, lies beneath the tarmac of the modern A591 trunk road (see Figure 3).

Upon reflection, that so many of these places fall along this single route makes sense, especially when we consider that this highly scenic road – still regularly voted 'Britain's favourite drive' – has long been an essential link in the Lake District's transportation network.<sup>42</sup> Even today, it is the only main route running through the very heart of the Lakes, covering more ground and, frequently, conveying more traffic than any other road of its class in the region.<sup>43</sup> In the Victorian era, its importance was

41. This is a distinction made in much Victorian writing about the Lakes region, perhaps most notably in Hardwicke Drummond Rawnsley's *Literary Associations of the English Lakes*, 2 vols (Glasgow: James MacLehose, 1894), the first volume of which is devoted to 'Cumberland, Keswick and Southey's Country', and the second to 'Westmorland, Windermere and the Haunts of Wordsworth'.

42. See, for instance, 'Tourist Season Spruce Up for Lake District Road', *The Westmorland Gazette* (5 March 2010) <[http://www.thewestmorlandgazette.co.uk/news/5044651.Tourist\\_season\\_spruce\\_up\\_for\\_Lake\\_District\\_road/](http://www.thewestmorlandgazette.co.uk/news/5044651.Tourist_season_spruce_up_for_Lake_District_road/)> [accessed 28 April 2014].

43. See, for example, D. Holding, N. D. Morpeth, and D. H. Robinson, 'Sustainable Transport Management and Cycle Tourism', in *Sustainable Tourism in the English Lake District*, ed. by David W. G. Hind and John P. Mitchell (Sunderland: Business Education Publishers, 2004), p. 184.

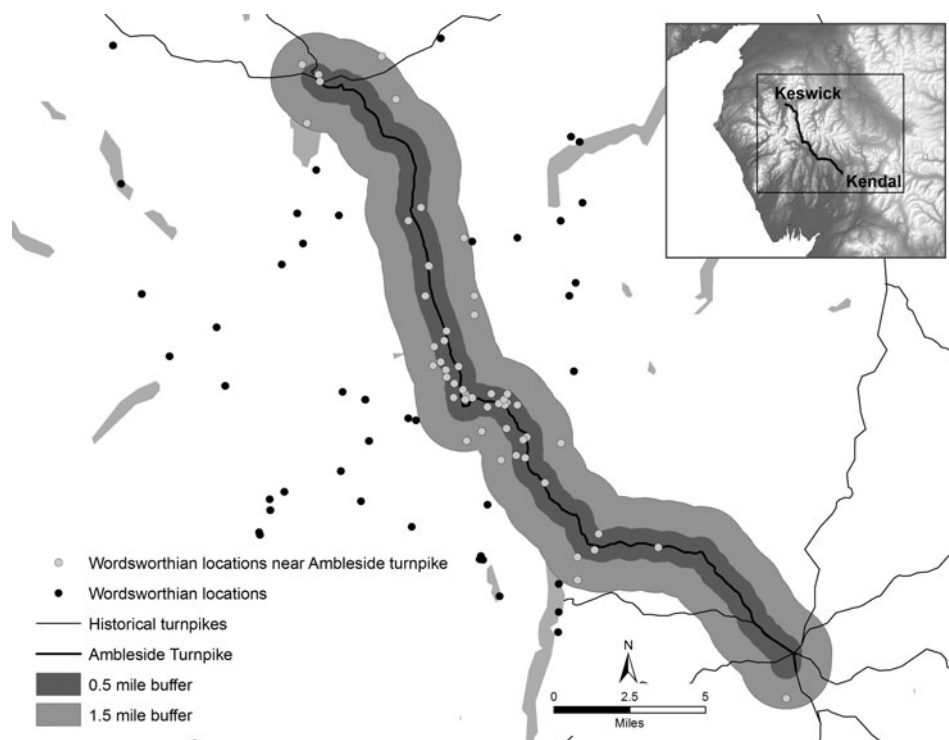


Figure 3. Route of the Ambleside turnpike (c. 1855). Note: As shown here, almost half of the 529 places represented in Figure 1 are located within a mile and a half of this road. More than 80% of these places are less than a half mile away. Source: The Authors; created with ArcGIS © ESRI, 2015.

even more paramount. After being widened and improved by the Ambleside Turnpike Trust, it came to serve as the main conduit between the rail and steamer services at Windermere and the district's two other premier tourist centres: the old market town of Keswick and the burgeoning village of Ambleside.<sup>44</sup> The portion of the route connecting these three resorts – and, not insignificantly, both Rydal and Grasmere – was especially prized. Frequently extolled as affording the traveller views of 'the most beautiful highway-scenery in England', it was also renowned as 'the trunk of the District', since, as one local guide clarified, it connected 'three-fourths of the other roads' and carried 'by far the largest stream of traffic'.<sup>45</sup> Here, of course, one must recognize that the scenic beauty of this turnpike and its more tangible significance as a trunk road proceeded from the same cause: namely, that, for much of its length, it is flanked on either side by mountainous, and therefore arduous, terrain. It was,

44. On the relationship of these three tourists centres, see John K. Walton and P. R. McGloin, 'The Tourist Trade in Victorian Lakeland', *Northern History*, 17 (1981), 153–82.

45. Herman Prior, *Ascents and Passes in the Lake District of England: A New Pedestrian and General Guide* (Windermere: Garnett, 1865), p. 145; and *Pedestrian and General Guide to the Lake District*, 2nd edn (Windermere: Garnett, 1881), p. 34.

accordingly, the choice path to follow through the region's rolling upland landscape. At any rate, it was principally on account of this unique alignment of the local topography, transport infrastructure, and tourist trade that the Ambleside Trust managed not merely to survive but to thrive, even as other trusts throughout the country were beginning to disappear. Indeed, as Lawrence A. Williams has shown, the popularity of this road and its commercial success was a significant factor in preventing the proposed construction of a railway from Windermere to Keswick via Rydal and Grasmere in the mid-1870s.<sup>46</sup> The road most strongly associated with Wordsworth, whose protests against the extension of railways into the Lake District are well known, thus can be seen to have played a crucial role in preserving the peace of his homeland.

The records of the Ambleside Trust's tollgate returns are fragmentary, but those that survive affirm the long-term success of the turnpike road. Notably, in the year of Hawthorne's visit, 21,480 carriages passed through the Trust's tollgate at Troutbeck Bridge alone, with an additional 15,240 vehicles (including the author's carriage) continuing north towards Grasmere and Keswick.<sup>47</sup> Calculating how many of the passengers in those vehicles were tourists, let alone literary tourists, is of course an elusive task, and one in no small way complicated by the difficulties that attend any attempt to define what tourism is or to gauge its economic impact. One could obviously attempt to compensate for such uncertainties by excluding a proportion of those passengers who made the journey by cart or by the mail-coach on the grounds that they were likely travelling for business rather than pleasure.<sup>48</sup> To do so, however, would be to assume that the motivations of any traveller can be so neatly circumscribed, and this is demonstrably not the case. Certainly, as the Hawthornes' tour evinces, even those tourists who sought out the world behind Wordsworth's works were drawn to the Lakes for other reasons: namely, health, rest, and relaxation. But arriving at the precise number of tourists on the turnpike in any given year is, in some sense, beside the point. What really matters here is the correlation that the maps help us discern between this busy coach road, as a space of the traveller's experience, and the sites to which Lakeland visitors flocked during the Victorian era.

---

46. See, on this topic, Lawrence A. Williams, *Road Transport in Cumbria in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1975), pp. 155–62; George H. Tupling, 'The Turnpike Trusts of Lancashire', *Memoirs and Proceedings of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society*, 94 (1952–53), 1–23; John K. Walton, 'The Windermere Tourist Trade in the Age of the Railway, 1847–1912', in *Windermere in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Oliver M. Westall (Lancaster: Centre for North-West Regional Studies, 1976), pp. 19–33; and Jack Simmons, 'Railways, Hotels, and Tourism in Great Britain 1839–1914', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 19 (1984), 201–22.

47. Kendal Record Office, WST 1: Ambleside Trust Misc. Papers, Details of Traffic using the Trust Road, 1 May 1855–30 April 1856; cited in Williams, *Road Transport in Cumbria*, p. 160.

48. Compare Walton and McGloin's assessment of the figures from the Trust's tollgate at Plumgarth between 1843 and 1844 in 'The Tourist Trade in Victorian Lakeland', pp. 157–58.



Recognizing this correlation helps to deepen our appreciation of the relationship between the literary geography of Wordsworthshire and the physical geography of the Lakes region itself. Specifically, it helps us to appreciate how popular interest in the places where Wordsworth had lived, and about which he wrote, was modulated not only by interest in the Lake District's other attractions, but also by material conditions on the ground. The foregoing maps help to emphasize this point, as they show us that the sites most frequently associated with Wordsworth were also those that were not only nearest to the district's principal tourist centres, but also most accessible from its main road. Outlying locations, including the poet's birthplace in Cockermouth, seem to have suffered somewhat on account of their remoteness, as do other key Wordsworthian sites, such as the River Duddon, which one assumes would have attracted even more attention had its course run closer to Ambleside. This is, of course, a useful reminder (as Charles O'Neill and John K. Walton have put it) 'that there were limits to the combined power of [Wordsworth's] poetry and celebrity to channel tourist flows in precise directions', but it is equally a reminder that the Victorian fascination with the Lakeland's Wordsworthian associations was part of the larger confluence of interests and attractions that drew visitors to the region.<sup>49</sup> Though meaningful in their own right, places connected with the poet became tourist destinations as a result of their relative ease of access, which was determined by other factors, such as the presence of roads, the availability of accommodation, and the lure of additional leisure opportunities. By contrast, locations such as the Duddon Valley and Cockermouth, notwithstanding their strong Wordsworthian associations, drew less attention because of their relative isolation and distance from the major eastern gateways to the region.

### III. Touring Wordsworthshire

So far we have focused on assessing the geographical extensiveness and intensiveness of Wordsworthshire, and we have, moreover, documented the marked influence of roads in determining the places towards which literary tourists were principally directed. It is instructive, now, to return to the maps displayed above in order to consider what they suggest about Victorian literary tourists' experience of travelling through the Lakeland landscape as opposed simply to their experience of visiting individual locations. Once again, reading Hawthorne's notebooks is illuminating. Inasmuch as his account exemplifies the experience of many contemporary Lake District tourists, it suggests how visiting the scenes of Wordsworth's life and works was enriched by other local associations, not least with the Lake District's other literary celebrities. Hawthorne's record of journeying along the Ambleside turnpike is of particular importance in this regard, as he mentions having followed the coach road not only to Rydal Mount, but also past a plethora of other key cultural landmarks, including The Knoll ('Miss Martineau's residence'), Nab Cottage ('in which De

---

49. Charles O'Neill and John K. Walton, 'Tourism and the Lake District: Social and Cultural Histories', in *Sustainable Tourism in the English Lake District*, 19–47 (p. 21).

Quincey formerly lived, and where Hartley Coleridge lived and died'), and the Swan Inn ('where Scott used to go daily to get a draught of liquor, when he was visiting Wordsworth'), as well as St John's in the Vale (described by 'Scott, in the Bridal of Triermain'), which he visited while on his return from viewing the homes and haunts of Robert Southey, in Keswick.<sup>50</sup>

It is by virtue of such passing comments that Hawthorne's account of the literary associations of the Ambleside turnpike offers a glimpse of the larger literary landscape apparent in other Victorian accounts of the Lake District. Consider, to this end, the map in Figure 4, which displays the distribution and frequency of the places associated with 11 other writers who are frequently mentioned in Victorian Lakeland tourist literature: Matthew Arnold, Thomas Arnold, Hartley Coleridge, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Thomas De Quincey, Felicia Hemans, Harriet Martineau, John Ruskin, Sir Walter Scott, Robert Southey, and John Wilson. In total, the names of these individuals are mentioned in connection with specific Lake District places 287 times in the Victorian texts in the Spatial Humanities project's digital library. Intriguingly, as the map illustrates, once again the highest concentration (66%) of these places is located alongside the route of the Ambleside turnpike, with the vast majority being found within a short distance of either Grasmere or Keswick. As the high frequency of house names in the list of these locations suggest, whereas the former pattern is due to the fact that seven of these 11 figures resided, at least periodically, near Grasmere, the latter is due principally to the proportionately high number of places (34%) associated with the author, historian, and Poet Laureate Robert Southey, who lived and died at Greta Hall and is buried in Crosthwaite churchyard, both of which are located in Keswick.

Though an interesting task in its own right, using GIS to tally and to visualize this list of literary locations is important because it enhances our understanding of how roads, such as the Ambleside turnpike, helped to shape the material and imaginative geographies that underpinned Victorian literary tourism in the Lake District. At this level, one can begin to perceive how geographical technologies, such as GIS, afford insights that qualitative geographical theories of movement and mobility can help us to interpret. When we read the texts mapped in Figure 4 alongside the map itself, what we come to perceive is not only how routes such as the Ambleside turnpike channelled tourists to specific places, but also how, in doing so, they linked those places together, enfolding their local associations into a unified stream of experience.<sup>51</sup> More than mere roadways, at this level they functioned as cultural corridors: as pathways that brought together places celebrated for their literary associations and that, accordingly, helped to create the sense of an empirical, affective, and imaginative connection between the present and the past. More than simply lines of transit, they were (to adopt a concept from Tim Ingold) 'storylines': passageways through which the

50. *The Centenary Edition*, XXI, 246, 257, 256, and 270.

51. These concepts are adapted from Peter Merriman, 'Enfolding and Gathering the Landscape: A Geography of England's M1 Corridor', in *Routes, Roads and Landscapes*, ed. by Mari Hvattum, Janike Kampevold, Brita Brenna, and Beate Elvebakk (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 213–26.

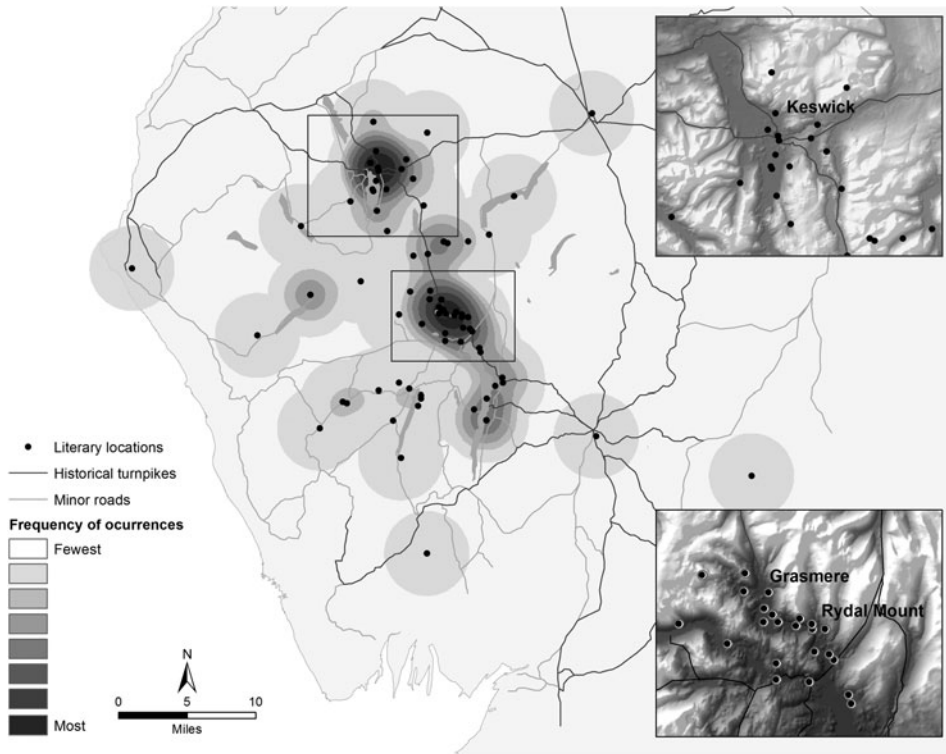


Figure 4. Places associated with 11 other writers who are frequently mentioned in Victorian Lake District tourist publications. Source: The Authors; created with ArcGIS © ESRI, 2015.

traveller, ‘recursively picking up the threads of past lives’, participates in the narrative creation of place.<sup>52</sup> As such, they had the potential to be appreciated for their association with the celebrated figures who had travelled and lived along them before.

Significantly, in the case of the Ambleside turnpike, this sense of a trans-historical connection was further intensified by the fact that the corridor in question was a coach road: a status that, in an era defined by the ascendancy of the railway, imbued it with a profound nostalgic appeal. Even for Hawthorne, who travelled throughout much of England, Scotland, and Wales during the 1850s, the sight of stagecoaches in the Lake District came as a pleasant surprise: ‘I suppose there are not many of those machines now running on any road in Great Britain!’<sup>53</sup> For his successors, who witnessed the disappearance of turnpikes across the British countryside during the subsequent decades, this sense of pleasure seems to have only intensified. For many Victorian tourists there was an irresistible charm in being able to travel along the road from Windermere to Keswick by coach. More than simply leading the visitors past places associated with the region’s most famous residents, the journey along this old route allowed the tourist to feel something of the sensations of a vanished age and, in the

52. Tim Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 90.

53. *The Centenary Edition*, XXI, 232.

process, to create an experiential relationship with the past. Indeed, one contemporary Lakeland enthusiast went so far as to avow that there was ‘no twenty-one miles’ coach drive that so stir[red] the imagination.’<sup>54</sup>

These are the words of Hardwicke Drummond Rawnsley, who published a serial essay about travelling on the old Ambleside turnpike in the *Cornhill Magazine* in the late 1880s. Written in the years following the successful opposition to the construction of two railways in the very heart of the Lake District – and, for that matter, on the cusp of the automobile age – this essay casts a nostalgic eye back on an earlier epoch in the region’s history and celebrates the curious power of the coach road to bring its past to life. Later reprinted as *A Coach Drive at the Lakes*, Rawnsley’s essay belongs to the cult of sentiment that developed around the stagecoach during the latter half of the nineteenth century, and which, as Ruth Livesey reminds us, was integrally connected with the ‘anti-metropolitan regionalism and preservationism’ that informed the Tory cultural politics of the age.<sup>55</sup> As a staunch Wordsworthian and preservationist (and later a co-founder of the National Trust), in this essay Rawnsley extols the virtues of the coach road not only for protecting ‘the beautiful Romance of Nature’, but also for inducing flights of imaginative transport. With words that anticipate what one finds in his better-known collection, *Literary Associations of the English Lakes*, in this essay he extols coaching along the road from Windermere to Keswick as an ideal way for Lakeland tourists to enter into the lives of the region’s celebrated figures.

Rawnsley’s essay is notable, even unusual, for the self-conscious attention it pays to the embodied experience of travel on the coach road. At this level, then, it can be appreciated as providing insight into an experience about which many other accounts of the route are silent, but to which the maps displayed above draw our attention. One paragraph, from the opening of the first part of Rawnsley’s essay, is worth quoting at length:

There is not anywhere in England a drive so full of that mingled natural and human interest which makes scenery so impressive. It is well-nigh impossible for sensitive minds not to feel something of ‘the light that never was on sea or land’ as they pass the thresholds of the good and great, whose thoughts have helped our England to be pure. In this coach drive to Keswick they not only go by the homes of the thinkers and poets and philosophers, but their foreheads feel the wind and rain that gave such freshness to the seers of the last generation; the sunlight on lake or mountain head that filled their minds with glory fills ours today. The woods and waterfalls that speak to us upon our way spoke also to them. We can in fancy see their familiar forms upon the road, and, as in eastern travels the ‘weli’ or way-side tomb made the journey’s stage rememberable [*sic*], so we find in this pilgrim stage through poet-land that the great dead lend it a kind of solemn sweetness, and the dust of two laureates hallows the wonder-giving way.<sup>56</sup>

As these statements suggest, the coach road celebrated in Rawnsley’s essay is more than just a convenient route. Rather, it is a place to be experienced in its own right, and one

---

54. Rawnsley, *Coach-Drive at the Lakes*, p. 4.

55. Ruth Livesey, ‘Communicating with *Jane Eyre*: Stagecoach, Mail, and the Tory Nation’, *Victorian Studies*, 53 (2011), 615–38 (p. 618).

56. Rawnsley, *A Coach-Drive at the Lakes*, pp. 3–4.

defined by a phenomenal topology, or what (to use the words of John Wylie) we might call a 'visual, tactile, and sonorous relation' that fuses the sensations and associations of the landscape together.<sup>57</sup> Rawnsley's punning on the word 'stage' is particularly significant, as it not only casts the individual points of interest along the road as stages within a pilgrimage, but also underscores the embodied experience of making that pilgrimage in stages along a coach road. Even more compelling, however, is the emphasis Rawnsley places here on the affective experience of the coach drive itself. The pleasure that he describes taking in 'the woods and waterfalls', 'the wind and rain', and 'the sunlight on lake or mountain head' that enable one to share the scenes and sensations that enlivened and inspired the region's 'good and great' is a pleasure one finds in many contemporaneous tourist accounts. As we have seen, this is precisely the sort of sentiment Hawthorne expresses about his visit to the garden at Rydal Mount, where he envisioned Wordsworth wandering and composing verse among his flower beds. Still, whereas for Hawthorne such a moment of spiritual and intellectual communion was rooted in the experience of an individual location, for Rawnsley it was integral to the journey along the coach road itself. Traversing the route, he suggests, possessed its own pleasure because it encouraged the 'sensitive' tourist to recall memories not only of Wordsworth and his contemporaries, but also to enter imaginatively into the bodily experience of their lives.

Rawnsley, though extraordinary, was not alone in placing such a singular emphasis on the value of the affective experience of travelling through the Lake District. Notably, writers who advocated touring Wordsworthshire on foot (the mode of transport most famously associated with the poet), emphasized how pedestrian travel allowed the tourist to embody Wordsworth's ethos while taking in places celebrated in his works. As Henry Frith, for one, advised in his essay 'Wanderings in Wordsworthshire' (1881): 'To see the Lakes, go afoot. Take an umbrella and stout boots, a haversack and waterproof [ . . . ] and walk like a Briton.'<sup>58</sup> Admittedly, some Victorian readers saw more affectation than potential for edification in such recommendations. There were naysayers like John Ruskin, after all, who adamantly maintained that the 'localities' of Wordsworth's poems were of 'no consequence' to the appreciation of his verse.<sup>59</sup> Such objections notwithstanding, the desire to experience the literary landscape of the Lake District prevailed throughout the Victorian era. Indeed, although few of Rawnsley's contemporaries were as zealous as Herbert Rix and William Knight (each of whom produced orienteering guides to Wordsworth's Lakeland writings), most readers seem to have agreed that 'Wordsworth could not be properly appreciated without some knowledge of the Lake Country.'<sup>60</sup> As Knight, for one, reasoned, possessing such knowledge was indispensable, since consulting the places that had inspired

57. John Wylie, 'A Single Day's Walking: Narrating Self and Landscape on the South West Coast Path', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, n.s., 30 (2005), 234–47 (p. 239).

58. Frith, 'Wanderings in Wordsworthshire', p. 420.

59. John Ruskin to William Knight, 24 June 1880, LHMS 190961, Pierpont Morgan Library. The quotation is from Gill, *Wordsworth and the Victorians*, p. 236.

60. Charles Wordsworth as quoted in 'The Wordsworth Society', *The Spectator*, 2729 (16 October 1880), 11–12 (p. 12).

Wordsworth could ‘in many instances [...] [cast] a sudden light on obscure passages in [his] poems’ and, in doing so, offer ‘the best commentary that can be given.’<sup>61</sup> Today, these might sound like the words of a man trying to give his hobbyhorse the trappings of scholarly sophistication. Yet it is clear that Knight’s view was far from unique. Certainly, when trawling through tourist publications from the last decades of the century, one discovers a trove of books and essays with titles such as ‘Walks and Visits in Wordsworth Country’, *Through the Wordsworth Country*, and ‘A Tour in Wordsworth Country’, suggesting that the appeal for making a literary pilgrimage to the Lakes had continued to increase.

Among these other works Rawnsley’s sentimental account of coaching on the route of the old Ambleside turnpike stands out as unique on account of the sustained attention it devotes to the experience of travel itself. Taken together, however, all of these works present embodied movement as integral to the practice of literary tourism. Whether by walking, wandering, or driving, the reader is encouraged to engage with the literary landscape of the Lake District by moving through it. Taking note of this emphasis in Victorian travelogues and guidebooks enables us to appreciate the striking concentration in these publications (highlighted by the maps included above), of sites of literary interest located along the thoroughfares of the region, and in particular along the Ambleside turnpike. Reading the maps and these tourist publications in light of each other, as we have done here, helps us to enhance our understanding of the multifaceted nature of Victorian literary tourism in the Lake District. Specifically, it draws our attention to how modes of mobility and the physical contours of the terrain informed the experience of the tourist. Accordingly, instead of only conceiving of Wordsworthshire as a landscape comprised of individual locations, we also begin to appreciate it as a landscape defined by the experience of travelling between those locations along the Lake District’s roadways and thoroughfares.

#### IV. Conclusion

This article has focused primarily on the relationship between the imaginative and physical geographies of Victorian literary tourism in the Lake District. For heuristic reasons, in this study we have assumed a relative consistency across the period represented by the tourist publications in the Spatial Humanities project’s digital collection. One further step in developing the research presented here would be to work with a series of historically stratified GIS visualizations based on a larger sample of texts in order to evaluate whether there is significant variation in the prominence of specific locations and routes over time. The preceding pages have paved the way for such research by demonstrating the efficacy of implementing GIS to detect spatial patterns that can focus and guide scholarly inquiry. In this analysis, we have used Victorian tourist literature to identify literary locations in the Lake District, and we have mapped those locations onto digital cartographic representations of the region in

---

61. William Knight, *The English Lake District as Interpreted in the Poems of Wordsworth* (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1878), p. xii.

order to assess the geographic relationships between them and their surroundings. Considering these relationships, in turn, returns us to the tourist literature itself with a new alertness to the physical, affective, and imaginative experience of the journeys recorded therein. Thus, just as travel for the Victorian literary tourist gave access to the empirical world of Wordsworth and his contemporaries, so modern geographical technologies allow us to reconstruct and reconsider the experiential world of the Victorian literary tourist.

### **Acknowledgements**

Thanks are due to Katherine Baxter, Jeff Cowton, Kate Ingle, and Tom Lockwood for their insight and advice, and to audiences at conferences at Bangor University and Hong Kong University. The careful and supportive comments of the editors and two anonymous reviewers have, furthermore, greatly sharpened and strengthened this article.

### **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

### **Funding**

The research leading to these findings has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007–2013) / ERC grant 'Spatial Humanities: Texts, GIS, places' [agreement number 283850].

Christopher Donaldson  
*University of Birmingham*  
[c.donaldson@bham.ac.uk](mailto:c.donaldson@bham.ac.uk)

Ian N. Gregory  
*Lancaster University*

Patricia Murrieta-Flores  
*University of Chester*