

(Ball of Herdwick wool - handed round the audience “connecting them all”)

* It has been my immense privilege to work with the Wordsworth Trust and such an incredible bunch of people - I am truly honoured to have been part of this.



Thank you for being here and I hope you enjoyed watching the film; I *will* have to start with some genuine and heartfelt thank yous - Huge thank you again to everyone for all their different roles; Poppy for organising, The Scafell Hotel for creating our historical lunch, The Wordsworth Trust for supporting and believing in the project and joining the synchronous dots (and there were uncannily many).

Jeff Cowton for facilitating and holding the day, Richard, Jago and Ben for being imaginative filmmakers, Louise Anne Wilson for her excellent thoughtful artworks, Melissa Mitchell for putting together such a wonderful imaginative exhibition (it is still on!) the Paul's for their humour and good parts taken with aplomb, Dr Jo Taylor for being such an elegant Agnes “the trusted maid” and for having such a deep belief in the Dorothy of the letter (and an understanding of Twitter!), Anna for coming along and being a wonderful “with-walker”, Gavin for so stalwartly accompanying me on my preparation walks, and Barbara for being brave enough to sing with me in caves, and Harriet - you were the perfect Mary.

Having become familiar with Dorothy's writings through my work with the Alzheimers' Society, I became drawn to how she wrote, how she described what she saw and felt, how she noticed details such as the line of silver along a sheep's back, the shape of leaves and the the melting of colours.

* I've always loved being outdoors, I have always loved words and the pictures they paint; my paintings are often visualisations of the words I feel are there, whilst I am on a walk.

* I found the Scafell Pike walk quite magical, even if Scafell drew out its dragons and dervishes, will o'wisps, and wildcat winds, it was like watching an incredible performance. The upwards waterfall, the hurling gusts, the rainbow! The wind dance across Sprinkling Tarn, the change from minor to major, it was almost like Scafell was just letting us know that Dorothy's walk may have been blessed with a clear bright and warm day, but now was the time to show us the reverse in the mirror of that.

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* So to Being Dorothy - sometimes, you can have an idea and it can grow and change into a many-coloured and splendid winged eagle and take flight, whilst you watch, almost from the sidelines as the light-filled wings spread wide and soar. And so it was with Being Dorothy as part of This Girl Did.

* I have always been interested in the temporal expressed in the spatial - how being in a place where something specific happened, that was documented - and the only thing separating that person, that event and oneself, is time, like the translucence of a net curtain in the breeze, a mere shimmer away.

* Being Dorothy - I read her journals, I walked where she walked, I breathed the air, I looked upon the fells, I wore bonnets, a long gown (snug under the bust, leaves the rest of the body very free to move) and cloaks. I immersed myself and tried to imagine what she may have thought and felt, in order to see how doing this would affect my art practice.

* It has done so in ways that I couldn't have foreseen. Being Dorothy has started a long creative project I called JourneyWoman. A Journeyman was an apprentice who, in medieval times, travelled from place to place in order to learn and hone his craft. At the end of three years and a day he would present his "masterwork" to guilds in order to become a master craftsman.

* And so I am undertaking my own creative journey as a JourneyWoman for the three years and a day; finish date will be 12th July 2021.

It is a voyage of discovery, of exploration and of open-ended pathways. Being Dorothy has given me a focus, and has brought me to respond to my surroundings both through music and writing and sculpture, as well as through painting. One of the most exciting aspects of this has been the drawing in with other practitioners; conversations about creativity, about walking, about mental health, about environmental issues, about abstraction, about endings, journeys, adventure and synesthesia.

* Journeying and journalling, wandering and wondering - we have so many words for what Dorothy did.

Her walking was, I feel, was about several things - as well as her enjoyment and her acts of creativity, it may have been a form of escape for her, it may have been her medicine and therapy; her journals describe her almost manic appreciation as well as depression and malaise.

* We know she suffered much from head-aches and other ills, and was very "up and down". Walking helped, indeed when she became bedridden, her greatest sadness was being unable to walk her beloved fells. She wept when she was able to see her outdoors again after a long period of illness inside.

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- * Life for Dorothy was physically not easy, their little Dove Cottage was seemingly often full of guests, there were varieties of family dramas happening, and Dorothy was the homemaker and host. She worked very hard in a dark, often cold and smelly little cottage looking after a large number of people, baking, cooking, cleaning, growing vegetables, doing errands.
- * Her four hours walking a day were, I believe, her opportunity for freedom and an absorption in to the landscape. Not that she didn't enjoy living with her brother, having the visitors and the hustle and bustle - but to be herself, she needed to be away. Then she could have space to think, to observe, and her journalling was her way of talking to William when he wasn't there with her.

- * When we walk, all the "other stuff" just falls away; when we walk high, everything drops away downwards. Civilisation grows smaller, becomes tiny, delicate, miniature - we can marvel at its tiny-ness, it becomes insignificant and then it is gone and it is just us, with the shoulders of the hills that blurs their edges against the spreading vastness of sky. Walking being Dorothy, I would feel a sense of abandonment - not of been abandoned - but of abandoning the weight of baggage that we drag around with us.
I believe it was the same for Dorothy.

- * Dorothy often walked with William, they talked and spent many walking hours going through the poetry and sharing their creativity. For this is what I believe was the nature of their collaborative relationship. Dorothy - a woman of her time, was not expected to, and maybe had no desire to, find fame and fortune through publishing under her own name.
- * Her creative relationship with her brother was reciprocal - this was the gift economy of creativity - where both the giver and the receiver benefit. In my preparation walks, I mostly walked with my partner, another artist - and we talked and discussed in a way that we would not, if we had been static, and under roof.
- * Having the shifting sky as one's ceiling and the changing shapes and light of the land as we pass through it and it passes through us, brings about a different sort of contemplation and conversation. It is where the best ideas come from. Dorothy and William knew this. William said, "She gave me eyes, she gave me ears". I too, have come to know that through this project.

- * In our This Girl Did meetings, there were discussions about summiting Scafell Pike - yet throughout, I had felt that an intrinsic aspect of this project, was the actual journey - that is, the adventures along the way, the experiences of what we were to see, think and do; of what might happen, the emotional places we might go and the little epiphanies that we might have - they were what the walk was

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about - rather than the arrival at the peak. It is worth bearing in mind that summiting Scafell Pike had not originally been the intent of Dorothy and Mary. The idea had been to see the “delicious prospect” from Esk Hawse. Dorothy’s letter is about what she sees along the way, the conversations they had, how the weather changed and those small details that bring about deeper thoughts and engagement with the land that they were part of.

* The purity of walking is like a gift - we feel that we aren’t just walking in the landscape, but that we are the landscape. Dorothy would talk about how she immerses herself in her surroundings, in the fells, amongst the lakes and tracks. Whilst being Dorothy, I felt that sense of connection to the landscape - but it is more than that. We are not separate from the land - we are the land and the land is us - anyone who walks probably know this. The land’s bones are our bones, the water flows in our veins, weather breathes through us and, to paraphrase - we come from the earth, and to the earth we return. We cannot possess the land, we cannot possess what already we are.

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* When we were climbing Scafell in those conditions it felt as though the mountain was a living being; one who was permitting us to be there but was also showing us its power and its primeval and ancient theatre; it painted us with its orchestra and we could taste its words on the wind.

* The psychologist, Carl Jung, was interested in people’s personal journeys and their striving for emotional progress and in his writings he borrowed the concept of the Nekyia from ancient Greek mythology.

The Nekyia also known as the *night journey on the ocean*, a powerful metaphor. Jung adopted it as a symbol of the journey of the psyche to find emotional maturity or enlightenment. In the myth of the Nekyia the hero/heroine travels on a dark journey into a dangerous place, but returns to the light and emerges as a better person. To travel to the depths of one’s inner psyche and back in Jung’s Nekyia was a necessary process by which to achieve individuation.

* I have always been drawn to Jungian psychology; it celebrates creativity, and recognises archetypes; and his idea of the collective unconscious resonates with my own thoughts on how we need to connect with each other as well as with our surroundings.

* I felt that the Scafell Walk was in some ways, a Nekyia, a Night Sea journey. We started full of excitement and positivity, then we were faced with different challenges at different times, until through dealing with these challenges, we arrived safe back at the edge of the civilised world - possibly, changed people, with a

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sense of having achieved something quite monumental. At the start of the walk, we were a number of individuals yet by the end of the walk, the sense of the communal was strong - the Nekyia had bound us, as we were binding ourselves to Dorothy and Mary and their party.

* The *Nekyia* of the Scafell Walk was also very similar to the process of making a painting - and possibly, some of you will find this process familiar...the starting out with excitement, positivity, full of ideas, and then we start the bit of a slog, doing the parts that need to be got through before getting onto the focus that makes the painting "work". But that is where it becomes a challenge; it becomes harder and harder and more stressful, nothing seems right, until you sit with your head in your hands, wondering why on earth you chose this career path, you have no talent, nothing to say and are basically a bit rubbish and a fraud...there is a real low point. Really low.

* However, the way out, is to "stay on the bus" (thanks Rob!). To be determined, and slowly, the "zone" returns and answers begin to reveal themselves until your painting (or project) comes to fruition. We return into the light.

* How has the project changed my work? It has cemented my approach of painting a sense of place, of moving through the colours, lights and shapes, and of being part of the drama or part of the peace of a landscape. I have become more interested in the human relationship with the land, of how we are part of it, and how our marks demonstrate our connections - we must protect and nurture our land, because we are part of it. I have become interested in the idea of audience - bearing in mind Dorothy wrote for a reader, her brother (what would she have written for herself?) and so I am working on a project to do with women and authorship, and the idea of looking upon and possession, and audience - for whom do we make our creative communications?

* I recall how by a stream, we talked about how one renders water in a drawing; I said that if you look at running water for long enough, there are patterns that repeat themselves and you can draw them. "You don't need a camera if you have time" I said. Jeff liked that. To me, that's what creativity is all about. Communication, the seeking of understanding, and connection.

* We are all creative beings; making marks and sounds to both express our responses to our environment and our place within in it, to seek knowledge and to connect with each other - these are the earliest things that humans did - the arrival of the modern mind. We have a need to do creative activity.

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* In psychotherapy there is a theory that when two beings come together, a third is made - if and when loss occurs, it is the loss of the third being that creates such pain. We use creativity to connect with each other, to create a "third". We used to be so much more connected than we are today - we lived in wider families and smaller communities that didn't change much, and probably saw each other on a daily basis.

* Today, we are so very divorced from each other, we are disconnected. We have to make excuses to connect, we make "bids" for connection. We ring, text, email and diary each other - needing reasons to make that contact. Being Dorothy has led me to think that we need to reconnect - not just with each other, but with our natural selves, the outdoors, creativity activity and doing things together that take time - all these build bonds that we are beginning to miss as human beings - at our peril. Reading Dorothy's words, seeing what she saw, walking her walks, walking too, alone and in company of those I know well; these have all informed my practice and taken me down exciting new creative paths that I am still reflecting upon.

* In her letter, (her account was written for someone else too) Dorothy had detailed a short rain squall, tumbling streams and being treated to the sight of a rainbow. Finding what we thought was "her" stream and resting beside it, sheltering under what we thought was the crag where she had hidden from the rain, all added to the sense of being uncannily close - that sense of the temporal expressed in the spatial. And here we were, exactly two hundred years after Dorothy and Mary and their party...to Scafell, time-wise, it wouldn't even have been a blink of an eye.

* The following is an extract from my reflection of the walk...

"Then suddenly there was a rainbow! I gestured with my stick as the wind was too strong to talk. How incredible was that! We were also treated to the awe-inspiring sight of the wind whipping the leaden waters of Sprinkling Tarn into a ballet of dancing blooms of molten silver, as it flung the surface from side to side; white crests one second, black spirals the next. We watched transfixed.

* "The mountain is playing with us", said Paul D. How right he was. As we clung to the steep rocky track, we were hurled against, slapped and buffeted by the spirits of the fell. It truly felt like a living being showing us what it could do. I talked of mirroring the walk. This was inside the mirror, Scafell was showing us the other side of the Scafell that Dorothy had seen."

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* Harriet, Paul Davies and I slipped in and out of role, sometimes making Jo laugh as she said she couldn't tell if we were being Dorothy and Mary or Harriet and Alex.

"Maybe both at the same time", I replied. Indeed, there was a sense of that, and the more we went on, the stronger the sense of that original party crept over us, until I swear I saw them in the mind's eye, three strides above us, skirts swinging and bonnets bobbing. We weren't walking in their footsteps, but more stepping in their footprints.

Alex Jakob-Whitworth