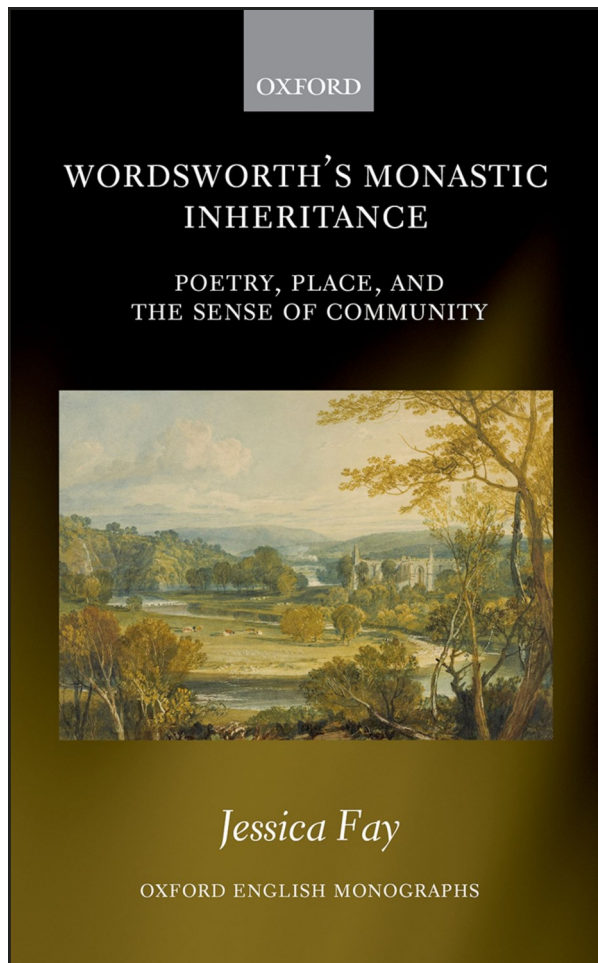


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Wordsworth's Monastic Inheritance: Poetry, Place, and the Sense of Community

Jessica Fay

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This is the first extended study of Wordsworth's complex, subtle, and often conflicted engagement with the material and cultural legacies of monasticism. It reveals that a set of topographical, antiquarian, and ecclesiastical sources consulted by Wordsworth between 1806 and 1822 provided extensive details of the routines, structures, landscapes, and architecture of the medieval monastic system. In addition to offering a new way of thinking about religious dimensions of Wordsworth's work and his views on Roman Catholicism, the book offers original insights into a range of important issues in his poetry and prose, including the historical resonances of the landscape, local attachment and memorialization, gardening and cultivation, Quakerism and silence, solitude and community, pastoral retreat and national identity.

Wordsworth's interest in monastic history helps explain significant stylistic developments in his writing. In this often-neglected phase of his career, Wordsworth undertakes a series of generic experiments in order to craft poems capable of reformulating and refining taste; he adapts popular narrative forms and challenges pastoral conventions, creating difficult, austere poetry that, he hopes, will encourage contemplation and subdue readers' appetites for exciting narrative action. This book thus argues for the significance and innovative qualities of some of Wordsworth's most marginalized writings. It grants poems such as *The White Doe of Rylstone*, *The Excursion*, and *Ecclesiastical Sketches* the centrality Wordsworth believed they deserved, and reveals how Wordsworth's engagement with the monastic history of his local region inflected his radical strategies for the creation of taste.

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