



Exploring Dorothy Wordsworth: An Entrance into Newness

Review by Serenah Minasian

Ari, Bryony, Catriona, Katrina, Lianne, Samantha, and SC. *Our Friend Dorothy*. Wordsworth Grasmere, 2021. https://wordsworth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Zine_digital-copy.pdf

Our Friend Dorothy is a zine composed by the multi-author group: Ari, Bryony, Catriona, Katrina, Lianne, Samantha, and SC, which was included in the exhibit *Dorothy: Writer, Sister, Friend* that engages with the life, relationships, and queerness of the British Romantic-era author Dorothy Wordsworth. Susan M. Levin, author of *Dorothy Wordsworth and Romanticism*, claims that “Dorothy Wordsworth is one salient example of a woman writer whose work was neglected” (5). Not only has her work been neglected but also her life. *Our Friend Dorothy* begins by shining light onto the importance of her life while focusing on her friendships, such as the one Dorothy shared with and Jane Pollard, which is depicted on the zine’s front cover.

The zine’s cover artist, SC, writes, “It was important to me to convey the platonic intimacy these women shared. Our group (the zine’s authors) discussed the challenge of communication in a world so heavily focused on sexuality, and how limiting it felt when interacting with those we love” (2). The zine emphasizes the importance of platonic friendship and how it is just as valuable as romantic relationships. Aromanticism reminds us not all people need, want, or desire a romantic relationship and that platonic relationships are equally valuable and viable. It is in another entry in the zine, “Dorothy’s Genius,” that one of the zine’s creators, Samantha, writes, “She thought of her friends often and they were a comfort to her” (3). Dorothy’s reliance on her friendships was comparable to those one has on kin; she thought of her friends as family and not as just acquaintances. Although our society prioritizes romantic relationships over other forms of relating, this zine crushes that amatonormativity (Brake 2012). In another entry, one of the creators, Catriona, writes that “Friends can be soulmates . . . And the most important people in someone’s life” (4). Catriona explains how their friendships often function as Dorothy’s did—friends being their only love in life, but in an aromantic way. *Our Friend Dorothy* encapsulates the importance of friendship and how it is hard to depict an aromantic friendship in an amatonormative society.

Our Friend Dorothy displays the depth and importance of friendship both by Dorothy and by our society. On page 7, another one of the zine’s authors, Bryony, writes, “I wonder if Dorothy ever had late-night thoughts and worries like mine? Would her imaginary midnight conversations to Jane Pollard in 1793 have at times looked like my messages to my friend on the other side of the world?” Bryony’s screenshots in the zine depict a friendship comparable to that of Dorothy and Jane—a friend who is a soul mate, one’s other half, a piece of peace in our world.

In the final pages, the zine discusses Dorothy’s relationship with her brother, William. A short poem describes a situation similar to Dorothy and William’s, about a close sibling



relationship that weakened when the brother got married. The poem sits opposite Dorothy's account from "Grasmere Journal," where she writes, "When my brother William was married to Mary Hutchinson . . . William had parted from me upstairs" (10). Both Lianne, one of the zine's authors, and Dorothy discuss similar situations, one occurring during Dorothy's time and the other in the present; both show how a sibling bond changes once their priorities shift. The sibling relationship is depicted as a bittersweet one—Dorothy was both upset her brother departed but also happy for his new beginning despite her deep sadness.

Our Friend Dorothy's final pages (11 – 12), leave us with an understanding of aromanticism and queer platonic relationships and some popular figures we can relate to: Artemis, Sir Isaac Newton, Emily Brontë, Sherlock Holmes, Nikola Tesla, and the zine's authors. Aromantic perspectives may be new in the theoretical study of British Romantic-era figures, but this zine imparts new knowledge of a community full of aligning people, including and especially Dorothy Wordsworth herself. This zine is of utmost importance for everyone to read because it highlights aromanticism—this zine examines a rarely foregrounded lens and shines light on the importance of the relationship that aromantic authors have with their texts. The authors of this zine are paving a way for aromantic studies to be acknowledged in academia and alongside the British Romantic Period.

Works Cited

- Brake, Elizabeth. 2012. *Minimizing Marriage: Marriage, Morality, and the Law*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- Levin, Susan M. 2009. *Dorothy Wordsworth and Romanticism*. North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc.

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