

14. William Wordsworth

William Wordsworth *Lyrical Ballads* (1798)

Lucy's poems

This is a group of five popular lyrics from the *Lyrical Ballads*, written in very simple language, which is appropriate for the subject matter. As for the Lucy in the title, it is not clear whether she was a real person – a girl from the countryside – or a symbol of Wordsworth's intense relationship with his sister Dorothy. The poem revolves around the indifference/difference contrast.

She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways 50

She dwelt¹ among the untrodden² ways
Beside the springs of Dove³,
A maid whom there were none to praise
And very few to love:

5 A violet by a mossy⁴ stone
Half hidden from the eye!
– Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky,

She lived unknown, and few could know
10 When Lucy ceased to be:
But she is in her grave, and oh,
The difference to me!

1. **dwelt:** lived
2. **untrodden:** solitary, no one walked there
3. **Dove:** a river
4. **mossy:** it. *coperta di muschio*

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The Rainbow 51

The poem below focuses on the rainbow as a symbolic element bridging the gap between innocence and experience, making the child the father of man. The paradox stresses the importance of childhood in shaping maturity. Wordsworth here recalls the Neoplatonic tenets that we come from an ideal world and our life is nothing but progressive separation and forgetfulness.

My heart leaps up¹ when I behold²
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
5 So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The Child is father of the Man;
And I could wish my day to be
Bound³ each to each by natural piety⁴.

1. **leaps up:** is so excited that it seems to jump in my chest
2. **behold:** see
3. **Bound:** Linked
4. **natural piety:** feeling of communion and worship for nature