

ANALYSIS OF SHE DWELT AMONG THE UNTRODDEN WAYS BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Background

"[She Dwelt among the Untrodden Ways](#)" is a poem written by the romantic poet [William Wordsworth](#). The poem was written in 1798. It was then published in the book *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800.

Structure

"She Dwelt among the Untrodden Ways" is a three-stanza poem. Each stanza is composed of four lines (quatrains) with an ABAB rhyme scheme. It is important to note the rhymes of lines 5 and 7 are merely eye rhymes, as the words "stone" and "one" do not produce the same sound. The general meter of the poem is consistent throughout.

Analysis

*She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove,*

From the first line of the poem, the subject is established. This poem is about a woman, though it is unclear at this point if her identity will be specified. The first line states the woman lives on a path, or in a place, not often visited. Wherever her remote location, it is near the springs of a place named Dove. The speaker claims the woman dwells on "the untrodden ways." This may also intimate she not often opts for something less conventional. She, perhaps, spends her time thinking differently than others and her actions reflect it. What is also striking about the first line is that the woman is no longer around. Whether she is simply no longer part of the speaker's life or passed away remains to be seen.

*A Maid whom there were none to praise
And very few to love:*

Given the time in which the poem was written, it is likely the woman was unwed due to the use of the word "Maid." Sadly, it seems this woman did not receive praise or affection from many during her life. The delicate lines of the poem suggest the woman did not necessarily deserve to be rebuffed. This could have simply been an unfortunate circumstance for the young lady or a result of her remote location. Her location also plays a role in demonstrating her lone life.

*A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye!*

These two lines continue the soft manner and flow. The softness connects to the description of the young lady. Though the speaker seems to think she is easy on the eyes, it is also insinuated she goes largely unnoticed. It is possible her beauty is of the simpler kind. This idea is also in keeping with the previous lines in which the reader learns she lacked praise and love from others. In addition, her seclusion is made clear once again with the description of the "mossy stone" and it (or her) being "half hidden."

*—Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.*

The notion the speaker found the woman described in the poem to be pretty is demonstrated by the use of the word "fair." Furthermore, this is shown through her being compared to a star. A star is bright and has long been of intrigue to mankind. Though others may not have noticed her, the speaker noticed her brilliance. Yet again, the speaker highlights her isolation from people. Not only is her dwelling place remote, she is remote. She is vibrant, unique, but alone. She is concealed but, somehow, manages to stand out to the speaker. The reader can sense true affection.

*She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;*

Though it was suggested earlier when the speaker referred to the woman in the past tense, it is not until the final quatrain the reader learns the woman has passed away. It is also in the final quatrain of the poem that the reader learns the young lady's name: Lucy. She ceases to be a nameless object of affection and materializes into a person the reader may mourn for, alongside the speaker.

Once again, the reader is struck by the woman's isolation. Her physical location, her dwelling place, is a reflection of her detachment from the world in spirit. She did not receive attention from many while alive. As a result, not many knew of or were affected by her passing.

*But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me!*

If the reader had not been clued in to the importance this woman had to the speaker, the final line is definitive. It shows how much Lucy was noticed and appreciated by the speaker, despite that not being the case with the majority of people surrounding her. She is now separated in location and spirit from the living world, even more so than she was in life. There is no clearer picture of her desolation than being buried, marked by the words, "she is in her grave."

Summary

The entire poem is elegiac in nature. The speaker goes through graceful description and mourning throughout the short stanzas. It is done in such a way the reader can appreciate the soft beauty and importance of Lucy. The speaker sets up her description so she can be appreciated from (presumably) his point of view. This is in stark contrast to her unpopularity with people in life. She is made out to be more of a forgotten and undervalued maiden rather than a woman with enemies. Though few knew of her death, it made a huge difference in the life of the speaker. She definitely stood out as a violet and lone star to at least this one person.

Theme

Given Wordsworth's "She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways" is an elegy, an obvious theme of the poem is death. The deceased is described, appreciated, and mourned throughout its entirety. Another stand out theme is loneliness. There was great loneliness in the life of Lucy and there is loneliness in the speaker's life. This is displayed right down to her dwelling place, somewhere far removed from most people. The reader can feel this theme in the description of Lucy's life and lack of admirers. It is also felt through the sorrow and lamentation of the speaker.