Solitude and Early Death in William Wordsworth's "She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways," "Lucy Gray" or "Solitude" and Strange Fits of Passion Have I Known."

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Abstract

The principal aim of the present paper is to reveal two major factors in William Wordsworth's "She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways," "Lucy Gray" or "Solitude" and "Strange Fits of Passion Have I Known:" they are solitude and early death. These two elements are a recurrent theme in some of Wordsworth's poetry. In the three poems, Wordsworth combines and sets these two factors together side by side to reflect their instant effect on a pretty girl who tends to live and die in nature alone. The two elements are organically interplayed to produce a sense of pity, sadness and above all depression.

Very few people enjoy every thing that William Wordsworth wrote. His work has, of course, been discussed from many different angles, but there is still a tendency to think of him purely and simply as a nature poet. William Wordsworth was born in 1770. It seems that he had a happy, healthy, unrestricted childhood. This was marred by the death of both his parents. His mother died when he was eight, his father when he was fourteen. This great heavy loss deeply creates in him a sense of isolation and later on is reflected and tackled in his poetry. Wordsworth could gauge human nature at its height or in the essence when he sees the human being set in its solitude. Therefore, the three poems, selected, have a great vitality.
which springs from a struggle of the mind to come to terms with the situation of man in a world in which man himself, whatever his suffering, was a being of special importance, unique and great immortal solitude soul.\(^{(3)}\) In this respect, Wordsworth tries and manages by all means to show the desolation of mere loneliness of the human being in a world which is devoid of love, happiness and sincerity.

In the first poem, the poet, (the speaker) focuses on the lonely state of a little child who is sealed off the whole universe. The first stanza describes the beauty of the girl in her isolated surroundings:\(^{(4)}\)

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She dwelt among the untrodden ways,
Beside the springs of Dove,
A maid whom there were none to praise,
And very few to love.  \(^{(5)}\)
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(ll.1-4)

The lines above express and reveal the inner feeling of the condition of the young girl who has chosen a place where nobody has tread on before. This place is near "The springs of Dove." Occasionally, people come to visit this fantastic area, but pay no attention to the girl who has hidden herself in its ambiguous atmosphere. The poet concentrates on her isolation when he describes the little child as "A maid whom there were none to praise." There are no people to flirt with, woo, or praise the young girl because she did live unknown; nobody has ever seen her alive. There were nonetheless "Very few" to love her.\(^{(6)}\)

In the second stanza, the little girl is compared to a pretty rose, a violet:

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A violet by a mossy stone,
Half hidden from the eye,
Fair as a star when only one
Is shining in the sky.
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(ll. 5-8)
The charming girl is similar to that beautiful rose which sprouts and blossoms among wild plants, mosses. It is only one flower which is not seen easily unless a person looks at it carefully, "Half hidden from the eye." What the poet tries to say is that the blossoming of the rose does not stay for a long time; it withers soon and this is applied to the life of the girl who survives for a short period of time. The little girl is also identified with the one star which is usually seen shining when "Only one" is visible, the Planet Venus, star of the goddess of love and beauty. Again, the shining of the one star in the sky at night does last for a very short span of time then it disappears and this is similar to the shortness of the girl's life.

The last stanza is fully devoted to the girl's sudden death:

She lived unknown and few could know,
When Lucy ceas'd to be;
But she is in her grave and, oh,
The difference to me!

(ll. 9 – 12)

The girl has now passed away. She has lived alone and nobody has felt her presence. For the majority of people, her death means nothing. For the few who do know her, she has simply "Ceas'd to be," but one person at least has felt her death as a numbing loss. He is the narrator who pities her: he is so sad and completely depressed. To finalize, it has become clear that the little child is put in a special isolation; she is the "Violet by a mossy stone" set by the one star in the infinitude of the sky.

With regard to the same theme presented in the first poem, "Lucy Gray" or "Solitude" conveys the same idea. Lucy Gray is the child whom Wordsworth has heard of. He has seen her once, once when he crossed the "Wild." Her life has been spent in a complete solitude on an expansive wasteland on "A wide moor." The stanzas which the poem comprises, illustrate the atmosphere of a particular place, at a particular time in a particular weather. The first stanza
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depicts the solitary being of the girl:  
  Oft. I had heard of Lucy Gray;  
  And, when I crossed the wild,  
  I chanced to see at break of day,  
  The solitary child.  
  
(ll. 1 – 4)

The first fact about the small girl that the poet names is her solitude: she is "The solitary child." She lives without any contact with any one and is very nearly not related at all to the human community.¹⁰

In the second stanza, the deserted, lonely, isolated condition of the girl is focused on:

  No mate, no comrade Lucy knew;  
  She dwelt on a wide moor,  
  The sweetest thing that ever grew,  
  Beside a human door.  

(ll.5 – 8)

The girl is sketched as "The sweetest thing." She is so fascinating, but no companion; no friend would love or appreciate her attractiveness. She dwells on a wild open area of land which is covered with rough, tall big trees and untrimmed grass; no one can easily get a glimpse of her on that "Wide moor."

In the fourth stanza, the girl is ordered by her father to go to the town to bring her mother back home, "You to the town must go," (l. 14). The child responds blithely and positively then moves straight on, "That, father! Will I gladly do," (l. 17). On her way, a storm is blown and the little girl is lost in the snow:

  The storm came on before its time:  
  She wandered up and down;  
  And many a hill did Lucy climb:  
  But never reached the town.  

(ll. 29 – 32)
The girl tries and struggles to find her way out, but in vain; she is left in the snow lamenting her deplorable, wretched isolation.

Soon after that, her desperate father and mother begin to search for the unlucky girl who seems not to appear at all:

The wretched parents all that night,
Went shouting far and wide;
But there was neither sound nor sight,
To serve them for a guide.

(ll. 33 – 36)

The last two stanzas reflect the doomed fate of the girl; Lucy dies young:

Yet some maintain that to this day,
She is a living child;
That you may see sweet Lucy Gray,
Upon the lonesome wide.

O'er rough and smooth she strips along,
And never looks behind;
And sings a solitary song,
That whistles in the wind.

(ll. 45 -52)

Presumably, the girl might be a "Living child;" she might also be seen or found somewhere. Lucy Gray is thought to wander "Upon the lonesome wild" and her face would never appear again. She has gone far away; the girl moves in every direction to find an outlet for her plight, "O'er rough and smooth she strips along." Yet, gradually, she begins to lose every hope in life and after that, she starts singing her "Solitary song" which would be echoed in the wind eternally. This song is the only reminder of the beautiful girl who has disappeared for ever. To conclude, it seems that Lucy Gray is really concerned with perfect solitude discovered in a perfect relationship with her own environment. She is solitary in life as she is solitary
in death; in other words, solitude is the eternal lot of Lucy both in life and death and this is fully emphasized by the full title of the poem, "Lucy Gray" or "Solitude."

"Strange Fits of Passion Have I Known" is the last poem which sketches the small girl's solitude and her sudden death in its bare meaning. The poem is short, but it is highly suggestive as the poet uses certain symbols to carry out his aim. The sense of solitude is tackled indirectly through the presentation of two natural elements, namely: the rose of June and the evening moon. In the poem, the speaker, the lover, presents the pretty girl as lonely at night when the moon spreads its light on a single, small cottage where the girl dwells in:

When she I loved looked everyday,
Fresh as a rose in June;
I to her cottage bent my way,
Beneath an evening moon.

(ll. 1-4)

The speaker, here, identifies the beautiful girl with a beautiful rose in June," Fresh as a rose in June." The young girl is also compared to the moon, "An evening moon" which seems to foster and protect the lovely girl in her cozy cottage. In the following stanza, the state of solitude is heightened:

And now we reached the orchard- plot,
And as we climbed the hill,
The sinking moon to her cot.,
Came near and nearer still.

(ll. 5- 8)

It is the lover who tries by all means to approach the place of that young lady in order that he would lessen her heavy burden of loneliness, but he fails to achieve this eminent desire because the girl is going to disappear soon:
In one of my sweet dreams I slept,  
Kind Nature gentlest boon!  
And all the while my eyes I kept,  
On the descending moon.  

(ll. 9-12)

The repetition of "The evening moon" in the first stanza, "The sinking moon" in the second one and "The descending moon" in the third stanza creates, in the lover's zeal and enthusiasm to reach the cottage, a fearful sense of loss. It is the loss that makes him much worried about her doomed fate. The next stanza indirectly sheds some light on the early death of the wretched child:

My horse moved on: hoof after hoof,  
He raised and never stopped;  
When down behind the cottage roof,  
At once, the bright moon dropped.  

(ll. 13-16)

It is at this moment that the moon entirely starts to disappear as the speaker comes closer and closer to the girl's small cottage. When this happens, the lover is suddenly scared that the fascinating girl may be dead, because, in a flash of intuition, he realizes that "The rose in June" is fated to die as the moon is fated to set. Here, it is necessary to comment that nobody would think of the moon as it shines in the sky as setting, or of the rose in full blossom as dying. Furthermore, this impression offers the reader the feeling that the lonely life of the girl is a pattern in which growth and decay form a single process, the end of which is certain. The girl, like the rose and the lovely moon, after all, is subject to the touch of earthly years, i.e., death.

To sum up, it has already become evident that William Wordsworth has managed to present the lovely girl in her dwelling isolation. He has successfully expressed and showed isolation and early death in their purest forms. In the first poem, the girl goes by
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her own will to dwell on the "Untrodden ways" to entertain and admire enthusiastically the marvel and the beauty of nature, whereas in the second poem, Lucy is ordered by her father to leave the house in order to help her mother back home. Besides, the girl dies peacefully in the first poem, but her death in the second poem seems tragic. In the third poem, however, Wordsworth scores the same theme symbolically through the use of two images he has drawn, the rose and the moon: both are interplayed to produce solitude and early death.

Notes
7 Durrant, William Wordsworth, p. 71.
10 Ibid, p. 69.
12 Geoffrey Durrant, William Wordsworth, p. 64.

48
13 Ibid, p. 64.

**Bibliography**


المستخلص

الهدف الأساسي لهذا البحث هو لإظهار عاملين أساسيين في قصائد ثلاث للشاعر وليم وردزورث وهي تتشتي في طرق غيرمسلكية، لوسي كري أو الوحدانية ومشاعر غريبة قد عرفت. إنهم الوحدانية والمتوت المبكر. إن هذين العنصرين هما أحد غايات وردزورث الدائمة في معظم قصانه. في هذه القصائد، يقوم الشاعر بربط وإدخال هذين العنصرين مع بعضهما البعض لكي يكون انكاسهما واضحا على شابة يافعة أثرت أن تعيش وتموت في البرية وحيدة. إن هذين العاملان قد يتفاعلان بشكل عضوي للوصول إلى حالة من الأسى والحزن والكتابة.