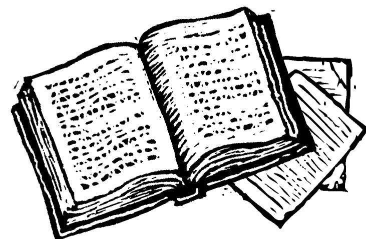
I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

1815

"I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" is a short lyric poem by the English Romantic poet William Wordsworth. It was written in 1804 and first published in his *Poems, in Two Volumes* in 1807. A revised version, in which the poem was expanded from three stanzas to four, was published in Wordsworth's *Poems* in 1815. The origin of the poem lies in a walk that Wordsworth took with his sister Dorothy in the Lake District in northwest England, where the Wordsworths lived. This was on April 15, 1802, when the Wordsworths were walking near Gowbarrow Park, near Ullswater, and came upon a large number of daffodils near the water. Dorothy described the scene in her *Grasmere Journals*. William did not write the poem until two years later, making much use of Dorothy's account. The poem has always been one of Wordsworth's most popular. Indeed, it is one of the most famous poems in the English language. Quite simple in style, it shows how Wordsworth, like many of the Romantic poets, was inspired by the beauty of nature. It also gives insight into the way Wordsworth composed his poems.

"I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" is currently available in *"I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud. . ." And Other Poems You Half-Remember from School* edited by Ana Sampson and published Michael O'Mara Books in 2009.



William Wordsworth *(The Library of Congress)*

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Wordsworth was born in Cockermouth, Cumberland, a small town in the northern part of England's Lake District, on April 7, 1770. His family was quite well off and lived in the best house in town, which was provided for John Wordsworth, Wordsworth's father, by Sir James Lowther, who employed Wordsworth as his legal representative. Wordsworth had three brothers and one sister. His mother died when he was eight, and his father when he was thirteen. Wordsworth spent his first nine years at Cockermouth, and the natural beauty of the region made an impression on him that would inspire his poetry and would endure for his entire life. At the age of nine Wordsworth attended Hawkshead Grammar School and remained there until 1787. Hawkshead was a village near Esthwaite Lake and Lake Windermere. The first books of Wordsworth's long autobiographical poem *The Prelude: The Growth of a Poet's Mind* (1850) describe the blissful days of his childhood and adolescence that he spent exploring nature in and around Hawkshead.

Wordsworth attended St. John's College, Cambridge, in 1787, but had little enthusiasm for his studies. After graduating in 1791, he spent a year in France, during which he became an enthusiastic supporter of the French Revolution, inspired by its ideals of liberty and equality. He published his first poetry, *Descriptive Sketches*, in 1793, about the trip he had made in 1790 to the Swiss Alps. Two years later, when Wordsworth was living in Racedown, Dorset, in southwestern England, he met Samuel Taylor Coleridge, a fellow poet, with whom he was to form a remarkable friendship and creative collaboration. In 1797, Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy moved to Somerset so they could live near Coleridge. Wordsworth began writing *Lyrical Ballads*, with some contributions from Coleridge. The volume was published in 1798 and marks one of the seminal works of the Romantic period, and the beginning of what is sometimes referred to as Wordsworth's great decade, the period during which he wrote most of the poetry for which he is remembered. In 1800, a second edition was published that included Wordsworth's Preface, in which he explained his poetic principles.

Wordsworth, Dorothy, and Coleridge traveled in Germany during 1798 and 1799, and on their return Wordsworth moved back to the Lake District, living in Dove Cottage in Grasmere. In 1802, financially more secure because of a long-delayed inheritance he received from his father, Wordsworth married Mary Hutchinson, whom he had known since he was a child. They were to have five children, two of whom died in infancy. In 1807, Wordsworth published *Poems, in Two Volumes*, which included the first version of "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" as well as "Ode: Intimations of Immortality." Wordsworth quarreled with his friend Coleridge in 1810, and nearly two decades passed before they were reconciled.

In 1813, Wordsworth moved to Rydal Mount, Ambleside, a few miles southeast of Grasmere, and was appointed distributor of stamps for Westmoreland (this meant that he collected revenue for the government). Wordsworth was now a famous poet, but the poetry he produced after *The Excursion* (1814) showed a steady decline in quality. He also abandoned the radicalism of his youth and became a political and religious conservative. In 1843 Wordsworth was appointed England's poet laureate.

Wordsworth died at Rydal Mount on April 23, 1850. The final version of *The Prelude*, which he had been revising on and off for years, was published posthumously in 1850.

POEM TEXT

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees, 5
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay: 10
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay, 15
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood, 20
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

POEM SUMMARY

Stanza 1

In "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" the speaker describes what he saw one spring day when he was walking in the English countryside. The first two lines state that he was alone as he walked, and he compares himself to a solitary cloud high in the sky. Then suddenly he comes upon a splendid sight: a multitude of daffodils. The daffodils are under the trees and next to the lake. The daffodils sway from side to side, appearing to dance in the breeze.

Stanza 2

In this stanza the poet continues to describe the daffodils. There are so many of them that he compares them to the stars in the Milky Way. The Milky Way galaxy contains billions of stars and forms a band of light when seen at night from Earth. As the poet looks at them, the daffodils continue in an unbroken line at the edge of the bay. He estimates that there must be 10,000 of them, and they are all dancing in the breeze.

Stanza 3

In Stanza 3 the poet continues to describe the daffodils. He notes that the breeze is also making the water on the lake move in waves, but the daffodils seem even more joyful than the waves as they dance. In line 3, the poet says that it was impossible for a poet not to be happy when in the presence of such lively and cheerful company as the daffodils. In line 5, he tells how he stood for a long time gazing at the daffodils. But at the time, he adds, he did not fully realize how much the sight had enriched him. That realization would only come later, as the final stanza explains.

Stanza 4

In this stanza the poet reflects on his experience of suddenly coming upon all those daffodils. Some time has passed since he took that walk. Often since then, when he is alone, lying on his couch in a thoughtful mood, or with nothing much going on in his mind, he suddenly sees the daffodils once more in his mind's eye. The memory of the daffodils, and his ability to recreate the vision of them in his mind, brings him great pleasure, and he feels that his own heart is dancing along with the daffodils.

MEDIA ADAPTATIONS

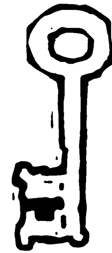
- *Great Poets: Wordsworth*, an audio CD, includes "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" in the selection of Wordsworth's poems read by Oliver Ford Davies and Jasper Britton. It was released by Naxos Audiobooks in 2008.
- *William Wordsworth: Poems*, an audiocassette, contains "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" in this selection of Wordsworth's poems released by Highbridge Audio in 1998.

THEMES

Nature

Perhaps the key term in the poem is "lonely," which describes the poet's state of mind as he walks in nature. He does not say merely that he was alone. He refers to a specific lack of a sense of

TOPICS FOR FURTHER STUDY



- Write a short poem that records an experience you had walking in nature. Try to remember a moment when you saw something that surprised or amazed you. In the poem, describe what you saw and how it affected you.
- With another student, research daffodils. How many species are there in North America? Can they be grown throughout the United States? How long is their flowering season? What is the origin of the name? Create a slide show in PowerPoint or similar software program that pictures at least five different types of daffodils, and explain the variations.
- Read the poem "To an Early Daffodil" by the early twentieth-century American poet Amy Lowell, and write an essay in which you compare and contrast it with "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud." How do the forms of the poems differ? What do the two poems have in common? Which poem do you prefer, and why? You can find Lowell's poem at the Web site Famous Poets and Poems.com, http://famouspoetsandpoems.com/poets/amy_lowell/poems/20005.
- Consult *Poetry for Young People: William Wordsworth*, edited by Alan Liu (Sterling, 2003). Read the biography of Wordsworth and the critical introduction. Referring to this material, write an essay in which you describe how "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" embodies the themes that typify Wordsworth's poetry as a whole.

community, or connectedness. He is isolated, and in the poem he uses the image of a solitary cloud to convey his mood. He is walking in nature, but he feels a sense of separation from other living things, whether human or natural. But then he suddenly catches sight of the endless line of daffodils, and this changes his mood completely. What meets his eye is not merely a static scene. The wind is blowing, which makes the daffodils seem more than usually alive as they are blown about in the breeze. In this scene of great natural beauty, the poet feels happy and restored to life in a certain way. Before, he was lonely, but now he feels cheerful, moved by the beauty of the scene. It seems to him as if nature, as represented by the daffodils, is alive with joy, and he is able to share that joy. There is therefore a connection between the poet and the daffodils that puts an end to his sense of separation.

It is perhaps significant that the speaker identifies himself (in line 15) as a poet, when he states that such a sight could not fail to make a poet cheerful. He does not say that just anyone would have been affected by the scene, or affected in the same way. For Wordsworth, a poet was a man of deep sensibilities who was capable of understanding intuitively the connection between man and nature. To be cut off from that feeling could only be experienced by a poet as a painful lack of something vital. The sudden sight of the daffodils in motion, stirred by the wind, jolts the poet into feeling once more the same life that flows through humans and the natural world. It is a moment of true communion with the spirit of nature, and this is why it restores his spirits.

Memory and Imagination

It is important to note that Wordsworth did not write the poem immediately after seeing the daffodils. Two years passed between the time he saw the daffodils and the time he wrote the poem. What prompted the poem, then, was not so much the experience of seeing the daffodils but the memory of it, recreated by the poet's imagination at a later date. What this shows is that for Wordsworth, what he calls in the poem the "inward eye" is in a sense more powerful than the outward eye with which he saw the daffodils.

Blue sky with clouds *(Image copyright Adisa, 2009. Used under license from Shutterstock.com)*

The poet says this quite clearly in the last two lines of stanza 3, which is why the last stanza of the poem focuses not on the daffodils as an immediate sense experience but on the memory of that experience. At the time Wordsworth saw the daffodils, he enjoyed the sight, as anyone would, but he did not realize its true significance until later. In solitude at home, when he is relaxing and in a reflective mood, the sight of the daffodils suddenly comes into his mind again, and once again he experiences a moment of communion with nature; his heart dances with joy just as he remembers the daffodils dancing. The point here is that the really significant moments come not when he is in nature but when he is withdrawn from it. He can recreate the experience for himself without actually going out in nature and seeking a similar sight. The implication is that although nature may, in the poem, be a wonderful sight, the human mind is even more wonderful, since it can summon the experience again when no daffodils are in sight. Indeed, the pleasure afforded by the daffodils, thanks to the power of memory and imagination, has only increased over the intervening two years.

STYLE

Iambic Tetrameter

The poem is written in what is called iambic tetrameter. An iamb is a poetic foot in which an unstressed syllable is followed by a stressed syllable. (A foot, in English poetic meter, consists of two or three syllables, either one strongly stressed syllable and one lightly stressed syllable, or one strong stress and two lighter ones.) The iamb is the most common foot in English poetry. Almost all the lines in this poem are iambic. However, just for variety, the poet does vary the meter in certain places.

At the beginning of stanza 1, line 6, the poet substitutes a dactylic foot for the initial iamb, in the word *Fluttering*. A dactylic foot consists of a strongly stressed syllable followed by two lightly stressed syllables. In stanza 2, at the beginning of line 11, the poet substitutes a spondee (two strong stresses) for the iamb. This has the effect of emphasizing the sheer number of daffodils that he saw, since the stress falling on the first syllable as well as the second makes that foot stand out against the expected iambic meter. This is

particularly noticeable when the poem is read aloud, because what we hear (the spondee) is different from what we expect (the iamb). A similar variation occurs in the following line (the last line of stanza 2), in which instead of an iamb the poet uses a trochee, a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable (the opposite of an iamb).

Rhyme

The poet makes use of a regular rhyme scheme throughout the poem. The first line of each stanza rhymes with the third. The second line rhymes with the fourth, and then the last two lines rhyme with each other to form a concluding couplet to each stanza. The words used in the rhymes are mostly simple, consisting of one syllable. The use of rhyme not only supplies an easily identifiable sense of order and structure to the poem but adds pleasure to the reader's experience of it.

Personification

Personification is a poetic technique in which human emotions and feelings are attributed to inanimate objects. For example, the poet states that he is "as lonely as a cloud," which is a form of personification by use of a simile (a comparison of two apparently unlike things in a way that brings out the similarity between them). The poet compares his own loneliness to the loneliness of a single cloud in the sky. A more extended use of personification occurs in the descriptions of the daffodils. The poet describes them as a "crowd," which is a term usually applied to people. Further, the daffodils are described as dancing, moving their heads around almost as if they were human. Dance, however, is a human invention, proceeding according to measured steps. The fact that the daffodils are presented in this light personifies them by attributing to them a human activity. The personification continues when the daffodils are described as gleeful. Glee, which means joy, is a human emotion; presumably, daffodils do not experience joy, and certainly not in the sense that humans do, but the poet is prepared to attribute such joy to them because that is how it seems to him. The personification also has the effect of creating a subtle link, through the spirit of joy, between humans and the natural world.

Alliteration

Alliteration refers to the repetition of initial consonants. Wordsworth does not make much use of alliteration in this poem, but when he does it is with great effect. It occurs in the final line, the repetition of the *d* sound in *dances* and *daffodils*. The word *dance* is a key one in the poem, since it or a variant appears in every stanza. In the first three stanzas, it refers to the daffodils only; in the final line of the last stanza, it refers both to the daffodils and to the heart of the poet. The alliteration gives a pleasing sense of resolution to the poem, suggesting the connection between man and nature that is the theme of the poem.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The English Romantic Movement

As a literary movement in England, the Romantic era is often said to have started in 1798, with the publication of Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads*, although there were Romantic poems written earlier than that, notably William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1794). Wordsworth was the leading poet of the first generation of English Romantic poets, which included Coleridge (1772–1834) and Blake (1757–1827). Coleridge is most famous for "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," which appeared in the 1798 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, and "Kubla Khan" (written around 1797 but not published until 1816). The leading lights of the second generation of English Romantics were John Keats (1795–1821), Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822), and George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788–1824). There were all born about twenty years after Wordsworth but died young; Wordsworth outlived them all by nearly thirty years. To the second generation also belonged Felicia Hemans (1793–1835) of whom Wordsworth thought very highly, even composing a memorial verse to her following her death.

Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, published in 1800, was a seminal document in the theory of Romanticism. Reacting against the formal poetic diction and choice of subject matter in classical eighteenth-century verse, Wordsworth said he wanted to write in a new way, using simple language to reveal the most basic human emotions. He wrote about ordinary country people and everyday incidents in ways that revealed much about their feelings. Unlike the eighteenth-century poets, he thought that social outcasts, such as a retarded boy, a convict, a beggar, and others were suitable subjects for poetry. In placing the emphasis on subjective feeling and emotion, that of the poet and the subject of the poem, Wordsworth marked out a key area of the Romantic spirit.

COMPARE & CONTRAST

- **Early 1800s:** Wordsworth spends long hours exploring the Lake District, sometimes walking over thirty miles a day. He advocates for public footpaths in the area and believes that the Lake District is a national treasure that should be preserved. He is therefore one of the first conservationists in England.

  Today: Established as a national park in 1951, the Lake District is England's largest national park, covering 885 square miles. The highest mountain is Scafell Pike at 3,210 feet, and the longest lake is Windermere (10.5 miles). An immensely popular destination for tourists, the Lake District receives 8.3 million day visitors a year.

- **Early 1800s:** From 1803 to 1815, the nations of Europe are engaged in the Napoleonic Wars. These wars pit the French Empire under Napoleon against Great Britain and its allies, which at various times include Prussia, Russia, Austria, and Spain. As the French Revolution is transformed into wars of conquest, the English Romantic poets abandon their earlier support for French revolutionary ideals. However, poets such as William Blake and Percy Bysshe Shelley remain resolutely opposed to political repression at home.

  Today: There is no political movement in the world that excites idealistic young poets and writers the way the French Revolution excited the Romantics or the Spanish Civil War galvanized many English writers and intellectuals in the 1930s, including George Orwell. In 2003, British writers such as the dramatist Harold Pinter and the poet laureate Andrew Motion publish poems opposing the war in Iraq.

- **Early 1800s:** Wordsworth, a poet of nature, makes the Lake District the setting for much of his work that explores the relationship between nature and the human mind.

  Today: There are many English-language poets and prose writers who take as their subject spirituality explored through nature, including Annie Dillard, Jorie Graham, Wendell Berry, Mary Oliver, Robert Hass, Gary Snyder, and Louise Glück.

The human heart rather than human reason became the touchstone of truth; the authenticity of personal experience was preferred over knowledge passed down by tradition. Because of this emphasis on the subjective rather than objective elements of life, the Romantics excelled at the lyric poem, in which they explored personal thoughts and feelings. This might be considered the major genre of the Romantic period. Along with this emphasis on the subjective came an exalted view of the status of the poet. Shelley famously wrote in his *A Defence of Poetry* that poets were the "unacknowledged legislators of the World." The poet was regarded as a prophet and seer who could discern the truth of things.

The Romantics were explorers in the sense that they wanted to break out of the limitations imposed by the merely rational elements of life. They explored other realms of the psyche, including dreams and the supernatural (Coleridge's "Christabel" is a good example of the latter) and unusual states of mind (Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" and Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood"), as well as esoteric systems of thought, which fascinated both Coleridge and Blake. Many of the Romantics were involved in a restless search for the infinite. Their goal was to experience life in a more holistic way, overcoming the separation between subject and object and realizing, at the level of direct experience, the unity of all life. For the Romantics, the agent of this new mode of perception was not reason but the imagination, to which poets such as Wordsworth, Blake, and Coleridge attributed an almost god-like power.

Golden daffodils in a field *(Image copyright Chester Tugwell, 2009. Used under license from Shutterstock.com)*

Many of the Romantics were passionately involved in the social and political issues of their day. The early Romantics were all supporters of the French Revolution, believing that it would usher in a new era of freedom and justice in which man would finally be able to achieve his full potential. Later, the poets would become disillusioned with the course the revolution took, and Wordsworth was subject to conflicted feelings when England declared war on France in 1793. In general, the Romantics supported the ideals of liberty and considered themselves to be radicals, opposed to political repression of all kinds. Byron actively supported the cause of Greek independence from Turkey and died serving it.

The Romantic era is usually regarded as having ended in England in 1832. Although Wordsworth, perhaps the greatest of the English Romantics, would live another eighteen years, his most creative years were long behind him, and he had become a conservative figure. All the other great Romantics were dead. This was also the year that the Great Reform Act was passed, creating fundamental changes in British social and political life.

The Lake District

The Lake District is a rural area in northwest England that is famous for its lakes and fells (mountains), and is forever associated with the name of Wordsworth. Wordsworth lived most of his life in the Lake District, first as a boy in Cockermouth and Hawkshead, then at Dove Cottage, Grasmere, where he wrote many of his most well-known poems, and finally at Rydal Mount, Rydal. His poetry explores the landscape of this region in unique ways, and he knew the Lake District so well that he wrote his own guidebook to it, titled *Guide to the Lakes*, which was published in 1810 and went through five editions by 1835. Even at that time, the Lake District was attracting a burgeoning tourist industry, and in the later years of Wordsworth's life many people came simply to see the places he had written about, and even to visit his home and try to catch a glimpse of the great man himself. Other poets, such as Coleridge and Robert Southey (1774–1843), were also associated with the Lake District. Although not native to the Lakes, Coleridge lived in Keswick, thirteen miles north of Grasmere, for a number of years. Southey was a friend of Wordsworth' and was better known in his own day than in contemporary times. He settled in Keswick in 1803 and remained there until his death in 1843. He was appointed poet laureate in 1813. Contemporary writers coined the term the "Lake School" to describe these three poets, but the term has since been discarded.

CRITICAL OVERVIEW

Although "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" has long found favor with critics and readers, it did not meet the approval of Wordsworth's friend Coleridge, who listed in his book *Biographia Literaria* five "defects" in Wordsworth's poetry. The last of these was "thoughts and images too great for the subject," and he chose this poem as one of two examples. Coleridge's point was that the subject of the poem in the last stanza—daffodils remembered—was not weighty enough to supply the kind of bliss Wordsworth described. In Coleridge's view, the "inward eye" is something that occupies itself with more profound thoughts than daffodils waving in the breeze. Later commentators, however, have not endorsed Coleridge's view, preferring to draw out the deeper meanings of the poem. David Ferry, in *The Limits of Mortality: An Essay on Wordsworth's Major Poems*, points out that the loneliness of the speaker at the beginning of the poem "has nothing to do with a separation from the world of men. It is a separation from the harmony of things and the aspect of eternity." This separation is what is addressed in the movement of the poem, which "is a symbol of the poet's relation to eternity (and the difficulty of perfecting that relation)." In *William Wordsworth*, Russell Noyes points out that for Wordsworth the wind metaphorically represents the "creative spirit"; he notes that "the wind's action draws all parts of the composition together and relates them to the whole. It is the breath which, in the climax of recollection, fills his heart with pleasure and sets it to dancing with the daffodils." For Geoffrey Durrant, in *William Wordsworth*, the poem "is only superficially about the daffodils. " Instead, it is "an account of the experience of poetic creation." Durrant concludes his analysis by pointing out the following:

> Wordsworth in this poem is describing an experience of which all are capable, but which is increasingly neglected as men become preoccupied with business and professions. It is the imagination that enables man to enter into and give life and significance to the world.

CRITICISM

Bryan Aubrey

Aubrey holds a Ph.D. in English. In this essay he discusses how Wordsworth came to write "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" and what the poem reveals about Wordsworth's theory of poetry.

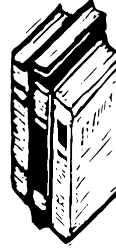
THOSE WHO KNOW WORDSWORTH'S POETRY WILL RECOGNIZE THE DESCRIPTION OF THIS QUIET, TRANQUIL STATE BECAUSE WORDSWORTH MENTIONS IT IN MANY OTHER POEMS, HOLDING IT UP AS AN IDEAL CONDITION OF THE MIND IN WHICH THE TRUTH OF THINGS SPONTANEOUSLY REVEALS ITSELF."

"I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" may well be the most anthologized poem in the English language, and generations of school students have been presented with it as an accessible work by one of England's greatest poets. "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" may indeed be a simple poem but it is not quite as simple as it might first appear, and it leads the interested reader into a glimpse of the philosophical aspects of Wordsworth's poetry and of his theories about how poetry comes to be written.

The origins of the poem lie in a walk near Ullswater taken by Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy in April 1802. The details of this walk are known because Dorothy kept a journal and recorded the day-to-day activities of herself and her brother. This particular spring day was mild but very windy, so windy in fact that at one point they thought they would have to turn back. But they continued and when they were in the woods they saw a few daffodils close by the lake. Then more and more daffodils appeared, a "long belt" of them stretching along the shore of the lake. Dorothy, whose journals were first published in 1897, long after her death (later published as *The Grasmere Journals* in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* [1979]), described the sight:

> I never saw daffodils so beautiful they grew among the mossy stones about and about them, some rested their heads upon these stones as on a pillow for weariness and the rest tossed and reeled and danced and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over the lake, they looked so gay ever glancing ever changing. This wind blew directly

WHAT DO I READ NEXT?



- Wordsworth originally intended his poem "Nutting," to be part of *The Prelude* but decided instead to include it in the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800. It is a fairly short poem that gives the flavor of *The Prelude*, telling as it does of one of Wordsworth's quiet adventures as a boy in the Lake District. The poem can be found in *William Wordsworth: The Poems*, volume 1 (1977), edited by John O. Hayden.
- *Black Nature: Four Centuries of African American Nature Poetry* (2009) by Camille T. Dungy contains 180 poems by 93 poets. The poets represented include Phillis Wheatley, Rita Dove, Yusef Komunyakaa, Gwendolyn Brooks, Sterling Brown, Robert Hayden, Wanda Coleman, Natasha Trethewey, Melvin B. Tolson, Douglas Kearney, Major Jackson, and Janice Harrington. The poems are drawn from all significant periods in the history of African Americans, including slavery, Reconstruction, the Harlem Renaissance, the Black Arts Movement, and the contemporary period.
- Samuel Taylor Coleridge's lyric poem "The Eolian Harp" was written in 1795, a few years before Wordsworth began to write his greatest poems. Although it was composed not in the Lake District, but in the southern county of Somerset, it has many of the elements that would later be found in Wordsworth's verse: appreciative description of a quiet scene in nature, followed by some reflections by a tranquil mind about the nature of life and of the interaction between man and nature. Like many of Coleridge's "conversation poems," it has a circular structure, ending where it began but with a deepened understanding of life as a result of the central meditative portion. The poem can be found in Coleridge's *Selected Poetry*, edited by William Empson and David Pirie (2002).
- "To Daffodils," a short and rather mournful poem by the seventeenth-century English poet Robert Herrick, shows that for some, the sight of a daffodil can arouse emotions other than joy. The poem is included in *Selected Poems of Robert Herrick* (2003), edited by David Jesson-Dibley.
- For those who are unable to visit the Lake District in person, the next best thing might be *The English Lakes* (1989) by Robin Whiteman and Rob Talbot, which contains over one hundred photographs of the area, along with an informative introduction and explanatory texts.
- *The Invisible Ladder: An Anthology of Contemporary American Poems for Young Readers* (1996), edited by Liz Rosenberg, contains a selection of poems that were written for adults but are also accessible to young readers. The poets represented include Rita Dove, Galway Kinnell, Maxine Kumin, Nikki Giovanni, and Stanley Kunitz, all of whom write short introductions to their own poems and include black and white photographs of themselves as children and as adults.
- Mary Oliver is one of America's finest contemporary poets; her work is notable for its observation of and reverence for the natural world. Unlike Wordsworth and some other Romantic poets, who often use nature to make grand statements about infinity, eternity, and the human self, Oliver is more content simply to record and enjoy the physicality of nature itself and its recurring cycles. Her *New and Selected Poems: Volume One* (2005) contains a representative selection from her forty-year career as a poet.

> over the lake to them. There was here and there a little knot and a few stragglers a few yards higher up but they were so few as not to disturb the simplicity and unity and life of that one busy highway.

With this description in mind it is easy to see how the poem came about. Dorothy wrote her journals not for publication but for the enjoyment of her brother, and obviously Wordsworth read this passage and was inspired to write the poem, perhaps within a few hours of reading it. Two years had elapsed between the walk and the writing of the first version of the poem, and the similarity in choice of words makes Dorothy's influence clear. She writes that the daffodils "tossed" and "danced"; it seemed as if they "laughed" and were "gay," and all these elements make their way into the poem.

The inspiration for the poem, then, came not only from nature but also from a literary source. It is also noticeable that in the interests of his poetic art, Wordsworth altered some of the details of the walk. In fact, he was not alone but with his sister; however, the creation in the poem of a solitary walker who feels lonely and is then cheered by the sight of the daffodils creates a more dramatic contrast than would have been possible with two walkers. Also, Dorothy reports a very strong wind, but this becomes a more gentle breeze in the poem, creating a softer scene than the one actually witnessed. Wordsworth's creative reworking of the material, both the original experience and Dorothy's account of it, illustrates the point that poetry is never the mere recording of facts but the poet's imaginative re-creation of the scene and its significance.

What is truly fascinating about this poem, which on the surface appears to be a nature poem in praise of daffodils, is that Wordsworth's appreciation of the sight occurs at two removes from the original experience. First, he is dependent on the literary source in Dorothy's journal. Second, what most inspires Wordsworth is not the initial sight of the daffodils. As he states at the end of the third stanza, he did not realize the full significance of what he saw at the time. He did not think much about it. But the experience of seeing the daffodils worked on him (so to speak) over the intervening two years, prompted by Dorothy's description and reaching a new significance not on Wordsworth's *seeing* the daffodils again but on *remembering* them, on recreating the sight of them in the quiet of his own mind when he was not out in nature at all but comfortable and alone within the four walls of his home. The poem, then, is not so much about a sense experience in nature but rather a mental experience, something that occurred within the consciousness of the poet, presumably with his eyes closed or half-closed to release the "inward eye." This became a source of pleasure even greater than that provided by the original sense experience. It is the mental experience that is also the source of poetic creativity; the writing of the poem came out of one of these moments, as Wordsworth himself makes clear in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, even though that preface was written in 1800, four years earlier than the poem.

Wordsworth's Preface explains his poetic practice and gives insight into how he wrote his poems. He writes that "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." The emphasis here is on feeling, the subjective realm of the poet's emotions rather than objects or events in the physical world. Wordsworth continues, "it [poetry] takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility." This is exactly what happened with those daffodils. In a tranquil state at home, lying on his couch, relaxed, his mind open, he recalled the emotions associated with seeing the daffodils, and this recreates that feeling in his mind, which is now, as he writes in the Preface, "in a state of enjoyment." Although the sight of the daffodils was a pleasurable experience, Wordsworth writes that even painful experiences, when recalled in a state of tranquility, can become pleasurable. The poem that results from this process is intended to produce in the reader "an overbalance of pleasure." Wordsworth's poetic technique, then, is intended to produce pleasure; this is the purpose of poetry in his view.

Those who know Wordsworth's poetry will recognize the description of this quiet, tranquil state because Wordsworth mentions it in many other poems, holding it up as an ideal condition of the mind in which the truth of things spontaneously reveals itself. It can be found, for example in "Lines, Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey," one of the most celebrated of all Wordsworth's poems, in which he describes in detail a physiological condition in which the body is extremely quiet and calm but the mind is highly alert, able to see into the depth and heart of things. It is this state of mind that can intuitively feel the essential unity between man and nature that was so much a part of Wordsworth's experience, especially in his youth and early manhood,

and on which he based his philosophical beliefs. Many such moments are described in the early books of *The Prelude*, about Wordsworth's boyhood and youth in the Lake District when he felt such deep communion with nature. A description that closely resembles the one found in the last stanza of "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" occurs in "Expostulation and Reply" (stanza 6); another example can be found in the final stanza of "The Tables Turned." Both these poems are from *Lyrical Ballads*.

Another key concept in Wordsworth's poetry that is relevant for "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" is what he referred to in *The Prelude* as "spots of time." These are particularly vivid moments in the poet's experience, often from early in his life, which he recalls later and which have a power to inspire, to reveal a truth, to restore the mind to a sense of its own vastness and the heart to its deepest feelings. In this sense, Wordsworth is a poet not so much of the present moment but of the past. He is a poet of memory, of the recollected experience rather than the immediate one. It is this sense that those moments during which he gazed at the daffodils became one of the "spots of time," subject to later recall and possessed of a kind of beauty and power that could nourish the poet's inner life long after the daffodils themselves had faded away.

Source: Bryan Aubrey, Critical Essay on "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," in *Poetry for Students*, Gale, Cengage Learning, 2010.

Rodney Stenning Edgecombe

In the following review, Edgecombe describes the emotional thought in the lines of "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud."

Rather as Tchaikovsky incorporated a prelude written by one of his pupils into his opera Opritchnik, so Wordsworth, with due marital pride, implanted the following two lines by his wife in "I wandered lonely as a cloud": "They flash upon that inward eye / Which is the bliss of solitude" (21–22). Either with a mildly malicious purpose, or in ignorance of their source, Coleridge singled them out in *Biographia Literaria* as "mental bombast, as distinguished from verbal" (224). If, he goes on to argue, the memory of daffodils occupies "that inward eye / Which is the bliss of solitude," "in what words shall we describe the joy of retrospection, when the images and virtuous actions of a whole well-spent life, pass before the conscience which is indeed the inward eye: which is indeed 'the bliss of solitude'" (224)?

This curiously Augustan response inverts and at the same time endorses the belief in decorum that led Johnson to fuss over Lady Macbeth and her knife, and it becomes more than a touch ironical if we set the lines against a passage from Rasselas that might well have inspired them:

> I am less unhappy than the rest, because I have a mind replete with images, which I can vary and combine at pleasure. I can amuse my solitude by the renovation of the knowledge which begins to fade from my memory, and by recollection of the accidents of my past life. Yet all this ends in the sorrowful consideration, that my acquirements are now useless, and that none of my pleasures can be again enjoyed. The rest, whose minds have no impression but of the present moment, are either corroded by malignant passions, or sit stupid in the gloom of perpetual vacancy. (534)

Mary Wordsworth seems to have remembered Imlac's juxtaposition of amusement and solitude in formulating the "bliss of solitude." Her husband, in the course of embedding them into a poem about the renovating power of the imagination, seems himself to have recalled the melancholy of Imlac's sic transit reveries ("sorrowful consideration" and "pensive mood" are cognate states) and also supplanted Johnson's "of perpetual vacancy" with Romantic pre-creative indolence ("In vacant or in pensive mood"). Furthermore, in virtual refutation of Lockean images that "fade" from the mental tabula, he deploys the forceful verb "flash," one that combines both motion and intense color. Coming to the poem from the same point of departure (for it seems probable that he too has Imlac's discourse subliminally in mind), Coleridge claims to find these un-Johnsonian adaptations of a Johnsonian sentiment indecorous, for why else would he blame Wordsworth for replacing the conscience—"by recollection of the accidents of my past life"—with a sensuous eidolon?

Source: Rodney Stenning Edgecombe, "Wordsworth's 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud,'" in *Explicator*, Vol. 60, No. 3, Spring 2002, pp. 134–36.

Matthew C. Brennan

In the following review, Brennan reviews the explication by some scholars of "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud."

Shortly after *Poems in Two Volumes* (1807) appeared, Wordsworth worried about readers misinterpreting "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" (Letters 174, 194–95). Still concerned in 1815, he

attached a note to the poem in his first *Collected Works*. "The subject of these stanzas," he asserted, "is rather an elementary feeling and simple impression [...] upon the imaginative faculty, than an exertion of it" (qtd. in Stillinger 539). Some critics have basically followed Wordsworth's lead: To Jack Stillinger the mental experience embodied by the poem is simple and ordinary (544), and to John Milstead the first three stanzas exemplify merely "a physical stimulus-and-response mechanism" through which the poet remains "passive" (89).

Nevertheless, in the preface to the 1815 collection Wordsworth not only argues that the imagination is ruled by "sublime consciousness" (Stillinger 486), but he also places "I Wandered" among poems categorized by "Imagination." Indeed, many critics ignore Wordsworth's comments on the poem and instead read it as representing a moment in nature of spiritual insight that recurs during a later imaginative re-creation (Joplin 68–69, Stallknecht 81–82, Hartman 5). More precisely, though, "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" dramatizes an experience of the sublime in its first three stanzas, which the poet recollects and re-experiences as a "spot of time" in the last stanza.

Like other sublime passages in *The Prelude* and "Tintern Abbey," this one draws on Edmund Burke's as well as Wordsworth's ideas of the sublime. Burke's thoughts in his *Philosophical Enquiry* are especially recalled in the lines that Wordsworth added for the 1815 republication:

> Continuous as the stars that shine
> And twinkle on the milky way,
> They stretch in never-ending line
> Along the margin of a bay:
> Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
> Tossing their heads in a sprightly dance.
> (7–12)

For one thing, by stretching in a "never-ending line" the daffodils embody the sublime idea of vastness, in particular "vastness of extent" or length. Compared to the sublimity of the "Simplon Pass" or "Mt. Snowdon," these flowers surely seem simple and ordinary, but that is partly because, as Burke explains, vastness of height and depth are more striking and grand than vastness of extent (72).

Another conventional cause of the sublime this stanza exhibits is infinity. The host of flowers appears infinite, hence Wordsworth's impression of their uncountable profusion, "Ten thousand saw I at a glance." As Burke remarks, when "the eye" cannot "perceive the bounds of" things or when they are "continued to any indefinite number"—as with the daffodils—"they seem to be infinite, and they produce the same effects as if they were really so" (73). Moreover, because Wordsworth stresses that the daffodils are "[c]ontinuous" they also constitute what Burke terms "the artificial infinite." This condition applies, Burke explains, through "succession," in which "parts may be continued so long, and in such a direction, as by their frequent impulses on the sense to impress the imagination with an idea of their progress beyond their actual limits" (74). In other words, the flowers are so numerous and extend so far from the poet's vantage that when he suddenly glimpses them, his "sublime consciousness" imagines them as infinite. Significantly, this numerousness of the daffodils leads Wordsworth to compare them to "stars," which because of their profuse number evoke for Burke yet another cause of sublimity: magnificence. Associating the shining profusion of stars with the flowers clearly lends them a similar magnificence and thus evokes a response from the poet akin to his traveler's in "A Night Piece" where "multitudes of stars" and an instantaneous gleam of the moon trigger a sublime vision.

Besides illustrating many of Burke's ideas of the sublime, "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" also encompasses Wordsworth's chief elements of the sublime as he defines it in his own unpublished essay "The Sublime and the Beautiful" written in 1811–12. Here Wordsworth divides the sublime into two types: one that is negative and thus similar to Burke's, which hinges on terror; and one that is positive and produces what Wordsworth calls in "Tintern Abbey" "the blessed mood." Both types, Wordsworth emphasizes, create a sense of "intense unity, without a conscious contemplation of parts" ("The Sublime" 354). Clearly, "I Wandered" depicts the positive sublime, which reveals unity by rousing "us to a sympathetic energy" through which the mind participates with the "force which is acting upon it" (354). Through his sublime consciousness the poet perceives the unity of not only the dancing flowers themselves but also the entire scene, which includes both "the waves" dancing "beside them" and himself as he "gazed—and gazed." In this moment of sublime vision, his imagination sympathetically unites him and the scene "in such a jocund company." During the moment itself he does not think; he is "without a conscious contemplation" of the elements unified by his sublime perception. But afterward when he recollects it and re-experiences it as a "flash upon that inward eye"—the agent of

sublime consciousness—he recognizes that, like the waves, he too "dances with the daffodils" while part of the interpenetrating "jocund company." This repetition of dance rhetorically enacts the unification of flowers, waves, and poet. The poem opens with the poet lonely, disconnected from his environment, and ends with him connected to it, enjoying "the bliss of solitude" through the unifying flash of sublime consciousness.

Though Milstead interprets the poet's gazing at the daffodils as unimaginatively passive and David Joplin construes it as intensely active because trance-like, the quality of Wordsworth's vision in fact falls somewhere between the purely sensory and the transcendentally spiritual. As we saw, Wordsworth's own note to the poem qualifies the experience as imaginative but one in which he does not exert his imagination. In other words, the poem appears to illustrate what he calls in "Expostulation and Reply . . . a wise passiveness." In this passive state he remains receptive to nature's powers, which both "Tintern Abbey" and "The Sublime" testify can produce the sublime; and through "wise passiveness" Wordsworth insists we can feed the mind, even without fully exerting the imagination. Thus, his gazing at the daffodils' dance brings him "wealth" and feeds his "inward eye" despite his unconscious passivity.

Stallknecht's explanation of the various levels of Wordsworth's intuition of "the unity of Being" overlooks the sublime but helps show how the experience of the daffodils evokes sublime consciousness: Although Wordsworth's mystical or intuitive consciousness of "the unity of Being" often followed "robust" imaginative activity, this consciousness "was also sometimes induced by 'wise passiveness'" (9, 12). Because, as Stallknecht writes, this passive state resembles the more active imaginative ones in allowing the "depths of consciousness to manifest themselves" (12), I think we can equate "wise passiveness" with experiences ruled by the sublime consciousness of "intense unity." Wordsworth unfolds just such a sublime experience in the poet's wisely passive vision of the daffodils in "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud."

Source: Matthew C. Brennan, "Wordsworth's 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud,'" in *Explicator*, Vol. 57, No. 3, Spring 1999, pp. 140–44.

David Joplin

In the following essay, Joplin explains the use of "host" in the poem, "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud."

Although a "nature" writer like Thoreau is widely recognized for his wordplay, his English counterpart Wordsworth is much less so. As often as not, his style tends more toward an Arnoldian "high seriousness" than toward a playful tour de force of language such as Thoreau offers. Nevertheless, Wordsworth is certainly not without his paronomastic moments. One such moment, heretofore unrecognized, may be the pun on "host" in "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud." Careful attention to host shows how Wordsworth, in a manner anticipating Hopkins, has brought together a number of meanings that help us understand how deeply the daffodils affect the poet's mind.

"Host" appears in the familiar first stanza, which I quote in full:

> I wandered lonely as a cloud
> That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
> When all at once I saw a crowd,
> A host, of golden daffodils;
> Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
> Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

The comma after "host" serves as emphasis, making us reconsider how Wordsworth intends its meaning. The most apparent needs only brief mention: The "host" is a "crowd" of flowers. The OED (Compact Desk Edition) lists host in this sense as "a great company; a multitude; a large number."

To understand how Wordsworth carries "host" beyond a mere "crowd" through wordplay, one must first note how the crowd affects the poet. In the penultimate stanza Wordsworth describes himself "gaz[ing]" at the daffodils: "I gazed—and gazed—but little thought / What wealth the show to me had brought" (17–18). The repetition of "gazed" indicates an intense activity, almost as if the poet were in a trance. Such an event bespeaks a shift in consciousness, what Owen Barfield would call a "felt change of consciousness" (p. 48). The final stanza emphasizes much the same experience, only this time it occurs through memory—the poet lies on his couch and recalls the "host," which then triggers the mind's reaction. The daffodils, therefore, affect the poet directly and indirectly through his eyes and his mind.

Now to circle back to the wordplay. Because the "host" initiates the effect, it is, as the OED suggests, the agent that "entertains." Or as the American Heritage Dictionary puts it, a "host" is the "one who entertains guests, a master of ceremonies." Wordsworth's reference to his experience as a "show" incorporates this second meaning. The pun, therefore, allows us to see the "host"—the

daffodils—as a "master of ceremonies" or guide who treats the guest—Wordsworth—to a "show," which is both the "dancing" flowers and their effect on the poet.

The punning grows more complex as we delve deeper into the nature of the show. On one level, the flowers simply bring psychological ease: The lonely poet sees the "jocund company" and becomes happy. But on another level, the event moves through a transposition into a spiritual experience. For one thing, the intent gazing signals a meditative moment akin to spiritual activity: As he drinks in nature's beauty, the poet attains an elevated state of mind. And the last stanza repeats the experience through memory. But in the latter case, the effect is produced only when the flowers "flash upon that inward eye." Although the "inward eye" is generally taken to be the imagination, it also has a metaphysical application. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy traces the image of the eye to a tradition that links it with the eye of God (50). This line of thought allows the "inward eye" to be seen as the spiritual center of the mind. From such a perspective, as images of the daffodils open his "inward eye," Wordsworth experiences a transcendental moment similar, at least in kind, to the one in "Tintern Abbey," when the temporal gives way to the eternal so that he sees "into the life of things" (48). The initiating "host," therefore, comes through wordplay to occupy the role of initiating priest.

This carries the pun even further into religious contexts. One is the "Biblical and derived" usage that describes a "multitude of angels" (OED). The golden daffodils fit this image insofar as their beauty invokes a correspondent spiritual beauty, as a heavenly host of angels would. Thus, the angelic "host" of flowers enables the poet to participate in a kind of spiritual beauty associated with nature. From here it is not a long step to the narrow liturgical sense of host as the "bread in the Eucharist" (OED). In that connection, the "host" functions as a symbol that transports Wordsworth, so to speak, to a higher level. The pun thus expands to include its full biblical and liturgical connotations.

Yet a final pun occurs through a shift in grammatical function. Host functions first as a noun, but it can also be a verb: "to play the host" (OED). Juxtaposing the nominal and verbal uses, one can see that it is the "host" that "hosts" the event. Thus, the noun host doubles, at least semantically, with the verb's meaning. Such linguistic doubling corresponds to the "layered" effect nature has on the poet.

When Thoreau, the consummate linguist, puns on host, his wordplay seems but yet another instance of his conscious manipulation of language. But I wonder if, in the case of Wordsworth, the pun is more of an unconscious event, one of those in which, as Erich Neumann might suggest, the poet unconsciously engages the archetype. In any event host does carry several semantic possibilities, each of which resonates with and amplifies the others, much as carrion does in Hopkins's wonderfully wrought "Carrion Comfort." These layers of "hosting" help us understand how deeply—and doubly—daffodils affect the poet's mind.

Source: David Joplin, "Wordsworth's 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud,'" in *Explicator*, Vol. 56, No. 2, Winter 1998, pp. 67–71.

Bernard Richards

In the following essay, Richards writes about the phonetic significance of the words in the poem.

> The waves beside them danced, but they
> Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:—
> A poet could not but be gay,
> In such a jocund company;
> I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
> What wealth the show to me had brought:

In his essay "A Touching Compulsion, Wordsworth and the Problem of Literary Representation," published in *The Georgia Review* (vol. 31, summer 1977), Geoffrey H. Hartman offers the following interpretation of lines 17–18:

> When Wordsworth writes: "I gazed—and gazed—but little thought / What wealth the show to me had brought," our ear may be justified in adding "I grazed—and grazed." Touch, or materiality, returns to the phantom of sight. The ear develops the image in its own way. (352)

He obviously has not had second thoughts about this reading, inasmuch as the essay has been reprinted in *The Unremarkable Wordsworth* (London: Methuen, 1987).

Consider the following groups of words: pied, pride, plyed; pate, prate, plate; paid, prayed, played; fame, frame, flame; bead, breed, bleed; baize, brase, blaze; pays, praise, plays; fees, freeze, fleas; cock, crock, clock; band, brand, bland; bent, brent, blent; goes, grows, gloze. In each case they would be perfect homophones, were it not for the difference of a letter, the letter being either *r* or *l*. With the difference being so tiny, should one not regard all these words as similar and

interchangeable? After all, what's in a letter? The answer is, of course, a colossal amount, and slight as it may seem, there is an enormous difference between goes and grows. The whole evolution of a communal and functional language has depended on precisely these apparently infinitesimal differences, and it is the duty of language users and commentators on language to preserve them if language is to continue to have any kind of utility. To this list one could add gazed, grazed, glazed.

There are considerable differences among gazed, grazed, and glazed. They are separate, and they should be kept separate. "The ear develops the image" says Hartman, but only an ear stuffed with physical and figurative wax could do such a thing. The figurative wax is a cast of mind that approaches a text with a predetermined thesis, insisting on associating the thesis with the text, irrespective of whether or not the text invites or sustains it. Hartman has made a critical move that is completely unwarranted; indeed, to call it "interpretation" is to misuse the term. It is more like creative vandalism. The essay is dominated by some concept of touch in Wordsworth, a sense that is undoubtedly present in many poems, but not in this one at this point, and the ear has no justification in performing the addition. If the ear did in fact confuse the words, then some other mental faculty should come into play to censor it out, and such a discriminatory function should have operated long before the so-called interpretation reached the printed page. Hartman should have had the sense and the humility in 1977 not to offer such an illicit extension of the lines; ten years later he should have had them in extra measure. It is a kindness to call it "criticism" or "explication"; but whatever it is, it should be strenuously resisted.

Source: Bernard Richards, "Wordsworth's 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud,'" in *Explicator*, Vol. 48, No. 1, Fall 1989, pp. 14–16.

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FURTHER READING

Abrams, M. H., *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature*, W. W. Norton, 1971.

This classic work is one of the best studies of Romanticism ever written. Abrams discusses English and German literature and philosophy, bringing out the parallels between different writers in terms of subject matter, themes, imagery, structure, and other literary elements.

Gill, Stephen Charles, *William Wordsworth: A Life*, Oxford University Press, 1989.

This well-researched biography is particularly strong on connecting Wordsworth's life with his work. Gill also makes use of some Wordsworth family papers that were not discovered until 1977. He argues that there was more continuity in Wordsworth's political and social views than has usually been thought, and that Wordsworth's achievement in his later years, long after his greatest poetry was written, deserves to be respected.

Pottle, Frederick A., "The Eye and the Object in the Poetry of Wordsworth," in *Wordsworth: Centenary Studies Presented at Cornell and Princeton Universities*, edited by Gilbert T. Dunklin, Princeton University Press, 1951.

This is a classic essay and one of the most detailed studies of "I Wandered Lonely as a

Cloud." Pottle examines the poem in the light of Wordsworth's Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, concluding that Wordsworth's subject is not so much the physical object but a mental image; he is therefore not a descriptive poet but an imaginative one.

Roe, Nicholas, ed., *Romanticism: An Oxford Guide*, Oxford University Press, 2005.

This collection of forty-six essays is one of the most thorough and up-to-date introductions to all aspects of the literary and historical contexts of Romanticism.