

William Wordsworth: A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal

“A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal”, a poem written by William Wordsworth was published in the Lyrical Ballads in 1800. The poem was written in 1798. This poem is one of her five Lucy poems. But the name of Lucy is not mentioned in this poem. In 1798, Wordsworth went to Germany accompanied by his sister Dorothy Wordsworth and friend S.T. Coleridge. From 1798, he wrote the first drafts of the “Lucy Poems”. In the “Lucy Poems”, Wordsworth expresses his idealized love for a girl named Lucy. In this poem though Lucy’s name remains unuttered, the focus is always on her. The poet is troubled by Lucy’s untimely death. The poem has two stanzas. Each stanza has four lines. The rhyme scheme is abab cdcd. The poet is free from any kind of fear like an ordinary human being. For him, his dead beloved is not subject to aging. In the beginning the speaker says that his very spirit has been consumed by a slumber or a sleep. He acknowledges the fact that his soul has been sealed up in a trance like state. This stopped him from seeing the reality of the heart. This slumber has freed him from any kind of human fear. The poet sticks to the memory of his beloved. For him, his beloved is ageless, perennial. Death is powerless to separate her from her lover. Instead of feeling lost, the poet tries to relive the memory of his dear departed. The essence of love outlives everything. Though Lucy is no more he can still feel her. The poet proudly proclaims, “ She seemed a thing that could not feel/ The touch of earthly years.” The second stanza reveals the truth of her death. The poet articulates:

No motion has she now, no force,
She neither hears nor sees;
Rolled round in earth’s diurnal course
With rocks, and stones and trees.

The second stanza is revelatory. The poet here accepts his beloved’s death. The lines contradict his assertion of Lucy’s ageless beauty in the previous stanza. In the second stanza the poet sees into the reality of things. He confirms us that Lucy is now motionless. She has lost her force as she is not a living , breathing human being now. She has lost her senses for perceiving things. She has become inanimate.. Like rocks, stones, trees , she has become an object of nature. The term “diurnal course” means daily. The poet pacifies his troubled state by accepting the laws of nature. The earth goes on rotating on its diurnal course even after the death of his beloved. The lines

expressing Lucy's motionlessness are vividly contrasted with the dynamism of this earth which continues to revolve. The personal grief of any person cannot stop the movement of the world. The poet emerges wiser by establishing a bond between man and nature at the end of the poem.