

Abstract

THE DEATH OF WOMEN IN WORDSWORTH, BYRON, AND POE

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This thesis explores and analyzes the portrayal of women, death, and suffering through the experiences of male speakers in William Wordsworth, Lord Byron, and Edgar Allan Poe's poetry. These poets create bereaved male speakers who mourn the loss of a dead woman in order to present themselves as male poets who are capable of showing intense emotions. While all three poets construct speakers who express suffering, each does so differently, each highlighting a different idea about the relationship between death and nature.

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

William Wordsworth, Lord Byron, and Edgar Allan Poe all wrote on the topic of beautiful, dead women in order to show readers they are poets who are capable of expressing intense feelings. These three poets create male speakers who suffer deeply from the absence of the women. As important, the men dread losing humankind through the loss of continuity made possible because of women and their connection to reproduction. To continue male autonomy, the men create an imaginary world through art in which they can overcome the fear of losing women who become part of life's natural cycle with their deaths.

What is the difference between how each of these three nineteenth-century poets create suffering male characters? Wordsworth's characters are usually reticent with their feelings. They do express sadness, but they are not as open as Byron or Poe's characters. Byron's characters express their feelings of guilt which torture them and there is always something to hide. Readers never know who the dead woman is in Byron's poems because Byron does not mention who the deceased woman or man is in his poems. Unlike Byron, Poe continually mentions the name of the deceased woman in his work to show how much pain the male speaker goes through thinking about his dead lover. Wordsworth also mentions the name of the deceased woman in his "Lucy Poems." With the exception of "A slumber did my spirit seal," Lucy's name is brought up in the other "Lucy Poems." Wordsworth, Byron and Poe all create male speakers who

start to become poets as they show readers the pain and suffering they feel from the deaths of women in their lives.

The characters are emotionally distraught after the loss of their lovers because there is something more than loss at risk. Elisabeth Bronfen, author of *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity, and the Aesthetic*, suggests: “The fear of death translates into a fear of Woman, who, for man, is death” (205). The woman constitutes the man’s sense of wholeness and stability. Women and death are thought to be two of the most “unrepresentable” things, and when the woman dies, it produces a sense of limitations for the man and means a closure to the mortality symbolically embodied in her. Women represent life because they bear children, but when they die, it threatens men’s continuity. The male characters that Wordsworth, Byron, and Poe create remember the deceased woman to fill this void, which recreates an imaginary wholeness and a defense against being weak or powerless.

In order to preserve the appearance of being vulnerable, these poets capture in art the deaths of the woman. Many artists confine beauty in art to preserve its essence even when the person portrayed in the art is no longer alive. The beauty of a woman gives the image of intactness and unity. When women die, it breaks the wholeness that was once held together, and the men are left with the pain from this broken unity. As Bronfen notes: “The poem commemorating a dead beautiful woman functions—like the inscribed slab, relief sculpture or statue which stands, since classical antiquity, over tombs—as a

'sema' or sign to indicate the burial place of a 'heroine' by substituting the body of the deceased" (71).

The relief sculpture serves as an imaginary stand-in for the dead woman, and the sculpture generates emotions from the male speakers. Poe states in "The Philosophy of Composition": "When it most closely allies itself to *Beauty*: the death, then, of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world — and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover" (122). The pain and suffering that a bereaved lover goes through illustrates that he is capable of showing intense feelings like a poet who is different from the average lover because a poet creates art and makes conscious rhetorical choices.

As a poet, Poe saw the death of women as a way of expressing his artistic side in which he sees the death of a woman as an art form as well as enabling the male poet to create art. Bronfen states: "By dying, a beautiful Woman serves as the motive for the creation of an art work and as its object of representation. As a deanimated body, she can also become an art object or be compared with one" (71). The dead woman serves as a drawing canvas for Poe, and he draws from the passionate emotions that overwhelm humans.

Poe illustrates how the dead woman functions as art in his short story "The Oval Portrait." He starts the tale with a narrator who seeks shelter in an abandoned mansion. The narrator is amazed by the different works of art that fill the walls. He sees a painting that seems life-like and later discovers that the

picture was painted by an eccentric artist, who unconsciously depicted his deceased young wife. The artist was too infatuated with his work to notice what he was painting. After he finished, he realized that he had painted the portrait of his deceased bride. Her spirit had become part of the portrait. Bronfen observes that “[t]he portrait of a deceased woman serves to illustrate how the pleasure representation affords, as this supports imaginary identification, is never severed from some form of death” (120). The image preserves women and reconstructs the power of masculinity in which men believe art makes them feel whole.

Then what constitutes art? Art is the creation of something beautiful by the artist. While the conception of beauty is defined differently for these three poets, they do not just see the physical, but also the moral beauty of a woman. Wordsworth sees the beauty of women in comparison to nature. Nature is the essence in which he sculpts his poems. In “Strange fits of passion have I known,” the speaker describes Lucy’s beauty: “When she I loved looked every day / Fresh as a rose in June” (l. 5-6).¹ Lucy is perceived as an image of nature. The way Wordsworth constructs Lucy gives readers the image of a kind woman who lives among creatures in nature. Her physical beauty reflects her inner beauty.

Byron’s idea of beauty is how much love he felt for someone. Byron remembers the beauty of his late cousin Margaret in his poem “On the Death of a Young Lady”: “Yet fresh the memory of that beauteous face; / Still they call forth

¹ All works by Wordsworth except *The Ruined Cottage* are from *The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth* (1932).

my warm affection's tear" (ll. 22-23).² In his diary of 1821, Byron continually writes how beautiful Margaret was, and even after her death, he described how she looked like a "rainbow—all beauty and peace" (377). Like Wordsworth, Byron feels beauty is not just physical, but is also the connection he feels with the person.

Poe sees beauty and death as one. In "Lenore," Poe describes Lenore's beauty as "The life upon her yellow hair but not within her eyes— / The life still there, upon her hair—the death upon her eyes" (ll. 18-19).³ Even though there was "life" on Lenore's hair, her eyes showed death. No beauty could hide the fact that Lenore was dead. For Poe, beauty is more physical than moral. In his poems he continually mentions the woman's physical beauty. The death of a beautiful woman leaves "the most melancholic tone" and for Poe, creates poetry in which he develops characters who grieve.

Byron and Poe do not use nature to describe beauty but rather use it to describe death. In *Manfred*, Byron compares the ghost of Astarte to the natural environment. When Astarte appears, Manfred states: "But now I see it is no living hue, / But a strange hectic—like the unnatural red / Which Autumn plants upon the perish'd leaf" (ll. 469-71). In this respect, Astarte is not compared to beauty in nature. Rather, Byron uses nature to emphasize the unnatural deathly color of Astarte's cheek. Even the leaf that Manfred uses to describe Astarte is a

² All works by Byron are cited from the 1945 Oxford UP edition of *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron*, except the diary entires, which are from the 1859 John Murray edition.

³ All works by Poe are cited from *The Poetical Works of Edgar Allen Poe* (1906) except *The Oval Portrait* which is from *The Complete tales and poems of Edgar Allan Poe* (1975).

“perish’d leaf.” For Poe, nature can be seen as a basis for art which uses nature as a backdrop for his poems. Nature helps capture the essence of the death image in his poems: “As the leaves that were crisped and sere— / The leaves they were withering and sere” (ll. 2-3). Leaves withering and drying also alludes to an image of a corpse.

On the other hand, for Wordsworth, the dying woman is not just portrayed in art, but she becomes part of nature. Wordsworth realizes that through nature, death is needed for new birth and growth. The natural cycle includes birth, growth, and death. Women are the maternal figure in nature through which this process is continued. In his “Preface” to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth describes the connection of a poet to nature: “He considers man and nature as essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting properties of nature. . . . Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man” (795). Wordsworth feels that the human mind mirrors the natural properties found in nature. With this pleasure, the poet is able to make poetry. Wordsworth believes being a poet should involve an association with nature. He uses Lucy’s and Margaret’s deaths as springboards for the male speakers in the “Lucy Poems” and “The Ruined Cottage.”

While women are part of the natural cycle in Wordsworth’s poems, Byron and Poe believe that women are mainly the object of desire for men. They see women as desire which the men fear losing with death. In *Manfred*, Byron

presents Manfred as a Byronic Hero who broods and towers over others because Byron wants readers to see him as a man with power who is vulnerable to human emotions. When Astarte, the woman that Manfred loves dies, Manfred feels as if he has lost the object of his desire. Usually men want to remember their lost loved ones such as Poe's characters, who continually repeat the deceased woman's name in order to prevent forgetfulness. However, Manfred is different from regular men because he wants to forget. Through remembering, Manfred drifts away from being a Byronic Hero because he appears weak from human emotions.

The male speakers who mourn the death of a woman are created differently by each poet. Wordsworth hopes to connect the bond between humans and nature with the death of a woman because a woman is a maternal figure to humans, as Mother Nature is to nature. Byron develops characters who are left without love. The heartache of love leaves the speakers that Byron creates in despair. Poe feels beauty and death build excessive sentiment as he mentions in "The Philosophy of Composition": "Beauty of whatever kind, in its supreme development, invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones" (119). These characters do not want to admit to themselves that their lovers are dead, and that is why these poets construct speakers who can't stop talking about their deceased lovers.

Chapter 2: THE DYING WOMAN AS PART OF THE NATURAL CYCLE IN WILLIAM WORDSWORTH'S POEMS

William Wordsworth illustrates with the topic of dead women as a base from which his speakers present themselves as poets who are capable of having intense feelings in which they cannot stop thinking about the deceased woman. In his "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth writes:

Taking up the subject, then, upon general grounds, let me ask, what is meant by the word Poet? What is a Poet? to whom does he address himself? and what language is to be expected from him?— He is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them. (793-94)

Wordsworth wants readers to understand how his language can touch the human soul in a way only a poet can do. As a poet, Wordsworth feels that he should help reconnect the bond between humans and nature. However, he sees that there are problems. In "Tintern Abbey," Wordsworth revisits Tintern Abbey after

five years. Going back to Tintern Abbey as an adult, Wordsworth “hears” the music of humanity that is lost in nature: “To look on nature, not as in the hour / Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes / The still, sad music of humanity” (ll. 89-91). A poet is able to build passion when there is none. Wordsworth creates this passion with the death of women. He shows that death and nature are needed for humans to continue the natural cycle as well as keeping the balance between humans and nature.

Wordsworth illustrates how the death of a woman is part of the natural cycle in “The Ruined Cottage.”⁴ He structures “The Ruined Cottage” as a frame narrative with three narrators: the pedlar, Margaret, and the narrator. They all serve as listeners and readers. The pedlar listens to Margaret and the pedlar tells the story of Margaret to the narrator. The frame narrative helps Wordsworth build on the idea of the pedlar being a storyteller to the narrator. The woman figure is absent in the poem because Wordsworth wants readers to see the speakers as poets.

In “The Ruined Cottage” Wordsworth shows the relationship between human emotions and nature. With the difficult economic situation in England, Robert, Margaret’s husband, had a hard time finding work. Wordsworth shows that labor is needed in order to keep the faith in nature. Wordsworth wanted Robert to keep faith in nature. However, since he could not find work, Robert

⁴ From *The Ruined Cottage and The Pedlar*, edited by James Butler. This edition has two facing texts available. The earliest complete version of *The Ruined Cottage* is published in this edition as well as *The Pedlar* dating from 1803-1804. Wordsworth joined the parts of Margaret’s history and the narrator, to produce a poem about the Pedlar. In 1802, Wordsworth combined these two parts and wrote *The Pedlar* in 1803-1804.

decided to do something for his country, but Robert's departure ended up taking Margaret's life. Margaret is abandoned and has to maintain the cottage alone.

The tragic story of Margaret is told by a pedlar, who shows sympathy for her. The pedlar tells the story to the narrator who is just as intrigued as the pedlar is.

The pedlar is between the present and the past when he recalls the memories of Margaret. He continues to tell the narrator how Margaret was kind enough to give thirsty wanderers water. Margaret's problem is that she does not know if her husband is alive or dead. The constant worrying has started to make her wander:

Her face was pale and thin, her figure too
 Was changed. As she unlocked the door she said,
 It grieves me you have waited here so long,
 But in good truth I've wandered much of late
 And sometimes, to my shame I speak, have need
 Of my best prayers to bring me back again. (ll. 396-401)

Wordsworth creates Margaret as a character too susceptible to strong emotions because when her husband leaves, Margaret feels abandoned and alone. The pedlar offers Margaret consolation by being there physically and listening to her story. Even with the pedlar's comfort, Margaret cannot not endure the pain anymore and bids the pedlar farewell, as she has no will to live: "She had not wish to live, that she must die / Of sorrow" (ll. 469-70). In the end, Margaret did not care for the cottage or herself.

As the pedlar tells this story to the narrator, it is apparent that the pedlar's mind keeps wandering back to Margaret. The pedlar "Wept bitterly. I wist not what to do / Or how to speak to her. Poor wretch!"(ll. 309-10). The pedlar did not know what he could do to comfort Margaret. He does not realize that his feelings for Margaret are deeper than he can comprehend: "A strange surprize and fear came o'er my heart" (l. 317).

The pedlar continually remembers Margaret: "Her heart was still more sad. And by yon gate / Which bars the traveller's road she often stood / And when a stranger horseman came, the latch would lift" (ll. 506-08). It is almost as if the pedlar can imagine Margaret waiting behind the fence, opening the latch. The pedlar wants to continue remembering Margaret by telling her story because he grieves from her death and does not want to forget her.

With the death of Margaret, the pedlar feels that the bond between humans and nature has been broken:

The waters of that spring if they could feel
Might mourn. They are not as they were; the bond
Of brotherhood is broken—time has been
When every day the touch of human hand
Disturbed their stillness, and they ministered
To human comfort. (ll. 135-40)

Though Margaret seems the least likely to connect humans and nature, with the pedlar's consolation and her death, she becomes the archetypal figure who

builds the bond between humans and nature for other people. If the springs of water could feel, it would know of sadness. After Margaret's death, when humans touch things in nature, nature resists. Nature waited for the human touch but received none, and now the bond is destroyed. The narrator also notices a garden that once was probably vivid, but now is wild with "matted weeds." This reemphasizes the pedlar's idea that the connection between humans and nature is broken after Margaret's death.

Karen Swann, author of "Suffering and Sensation in *The Ruined Cottage*," believes that the pedlar uses those moments when he meets Margaret to become a poet. His "incipient madness" goes as far as continually waiting for Margaret at an empty cottage. Swann observes:

Reading the peddler's treatment of Margaret through this fragment at the gothic limits of *The Ruined Cottage* suggests that there is method, and a poetic value, to his bouts of incipient madness, to those moments when his untoward investments in the tale seem to threaten its collapse into the poetry of sensation. (86-87)

The pedlar uses his pain of suffering in order to become a poet of sensation. Swann suggests that "the peddler recognizes and elegizes Margaret as a lost fellow poet, changed into something strange, dead before her time" (94). With Margaret's story, the pedlar creates words that captivate the narrator.

However, Kurt Fosso, author of "Community and Mourning in William Wordsworth's *The Ruined Cottage, 1797-1798*," disagrees with Swann's

argument that the pedlar uses this opportunity to become a poet. Fosso sees the pedlar mourning the death of a loved one:

The narrator and pedlar have indeed been connected by his elegiac narrative: the pedlar's "countenance of love" for his subject and the "familiar power" with which he relates its details correspond to the narrator's own sense of loving this dead woman. Theirs is a community of two mourners triadically formed by the messianic power and ghostly effects of a discourse staged against the shadowy presence of things absent and the absence in things present (things "not as they were"). (342)

The pedlar's tale of Margaret brings two male characters emotionally closer. The narrator sees the sympathy and sorrow in the pedlar's tale of Margaret and sees how the pedlar mourns the death of Margaret.

It would seem as if the pedlar offers both Margaret and the narrator consolation. Margaret is afraid and alone after her husband abandons her, and the pedlar offers to listen to her troubles. Though Margaret dies in the end, the pedlar was there for Margaret, unlike her husband Robert. In the beginning, the narrator is isolated from society and is guided with Margaret's story, who helps change the narrator's views on humans and nature. The narrator sees with the pedlar's story what he has been missing in life, which was an improvement that the narrator needed earlier in the poem.

With the death of Margaret in the pedlar's story, the narrator starts to see the meaning of the relationship between humans and nature and begs the pedlar to continue. Though he never met Margaret, the narrator felt as though he did: "I thought of that poor woman as of one / Whom I had known and loved" (ll. 265-66). The emotion the pedlar expresses in telling the story makes the narrator experience just as much sympathy for Margaret as the pedlar does. The narrator and the pedlar were brought together by Margaret's words that captivated the pedlar. In order to continue the bond between humans and nature, the narrator will most likely carry on the story of Margaret.

Wordsworth also writes about the death of a young woman named Lucy in his five "Lucy Poems." Wordsworth did not intend to have these poems read as a group. It was after his death that publishers and critics decided to group them together. This set of poems includes "Strange fits of passion have I known," "She dwelt among the untrodden ways," "I travelled among unknown men," "Three years she grew in sun and shower," and "A slumber did my spirit seal." The male speakers in each of these poems grieve the death of Lucy. Most of the time, the speakers have only seen Lucy from a distance. The speakers leave that physical distance between themselves and Lucy because it not only protects them, but also Lucy.

Like Margaret, Lucy is an absent figure in the "Lucy" poems because Wordsworth wants readers to see the speakers as poetic. The speakers express their thoughts and feelings about an absent woman named Lucy. She is seen

through the eyes of the mourning male speakers. Readers know Lucy only through the memories that the speakers recall. Wordsworth wanted to have an ideal woman who was part of nature, so he created Lucy. The only thing readers know about Lucy's physical appearance is that she is beautiful because she is compared to nature. Also, readers never know what Lucy actually feels or sees. Wordsworth uses Lucy to show that nature can be nurturing, and though it varies from poem to poem and in how Wordsworth portrays the speakers in his "Lucy Poems," he shows how the beauty of nature can help ease the pain of loss. The speakers want to believe that their deceased lovers are becoming part of nature.

In the "Lucy Poems," the male speakers are poets as they express their feelings of loss. Wordsworth feels that as a poet he is more connected to others because he can feel human passion that is there. As he states in his "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*:

If Nature be thus cautious to preserve in a state of enjoyment a being so employed, the Poet ought to profit by the lesson held forth to him, and ought especially to take care, that, whatever passions he communicates to his Reader, those passions, if his Reader's mind be sound and vigorous, should always be accompanied with an overbalance of pleasure. (797)

Wordsworth believes that as a poet he can create characters who express great emotions with the use of language and passion. He is impelled to find the right

words because a poet is able to speak to readers with his language in which readers feel the emotions behind the words of the poet.

Wordsworth illustrates the male speaker as a poet in “Strange fits of passion have I known.” As the speaker is riding on his horse to Lucy’s cottage, he recalls how Lucy always looks as “fresh as a rose in June” (l. 6). He compares Lucy’s beauty to a rose, and the speaker starts to say that he has experienced “strange fits of passion” and will tell them to another lover. He says to himself: “In the Lover’s ear alone, / What once to me befell” (ll. 3-4). Only another lover will understand the moment he had these “strange fits of passion.” The fact that the speaker is completely unaware of having these thoughts shows how Wordsworth reaches deep inside human emotions which people do not realize they have. He is “a man speaking to men” (793). Wordsworth shows the readers that he understands these intense feelings.

As the poem goes on, readers discover what is on the speaker’s mind. On his way to Lucy’s cottage, the speaker goes into a dream-like state in which he believes as the moon goes down something horrible is happening to Lucy. In astonishment the speaker exclaims: “‘O mercy!’ to myself I cried / ‘If Lucy should be dead!’” (ll. 28-29). His only focus on his way to Lucy’s cottage is on the moon, and the speaker does not understand that the angle he is at makes it appear as if the moon is actually disappearing behind Lucy’s cottage. The speaker cannot stop himself from thinking that Lucy is dead because these thoughts are brought out by the hypnotizing effect of the moon that puts him in a trance. The speaker’s

illusion of the moon shows that Lucy is connected to nature and emphasizes that in the speaker's mind, the moon and Lucy are one entity.

What actually causes the speaker to drift off into a state from which he can not awaken? The rhythmic sound of the horse's hoofs and the dark evening sky all contribute to the speaker's dream-like state. The image of a full moon in the evening sky signifies that it is well into the night and the speaker is most likely tired. This would cause him to drift off into a moment of sleep and start to dream from the shadows cast against the night sky. All these factors play an important part in causing the speaker to have "strange fits of passion." The movement of the "slowly" sinking moon and the "slowly" plodding horse brings suspense to the poem. This is a path that the speaker has travelled along many times on his way to Lucy's cottage. However, on this particular evening, the familiar path seems different. It is almost as if the speaker sees nature for the first time. He has always seen the moon, but does not notice the hypnotic effect it has on him. Wordsworth sets up this tone in which the speaker says: *this* happened to me, and it is *strange* that it did. It is almost as if the speaker does not have control over his own thoughts anymore. He has lost his thoughts to nature and is becoming closer to understanding nature.

In his "Loving to Death: An Object Relations Interpretation of Desire and Destruction in William Wordsworth's *Lucy Poems*," Robert J. Walz notes that in the poem "Strange fits of passion have I known," Lucy and nature are the main focus:

Like nature, Lucy surrounds and permeates the poet's whole being, externally and internally. . . . Furthermore, Lucy's seemingly insignificant "simple life" disguises the great significance her life has for the poet as the ideal female or "mother nature." This isolation is of great significance to the portrayal of Lucy and symbolizes, by displacement, the singular meaning that Lucy has for the poet—no one else exists outside of her—and the defense that Wordsworth erects against this maternal power by obscuring her being within nature. (23)

Lucy is so drawn into nature that, eventually, everything around her starts to become part of her. Lucy is seen as "mother nature." She is a maternal figure and represents the continuity in nature. With Lucy's death, the cycle of rebirth and growth remains consistent.

Different from "Strange fits of passion have I known," which shows a speaker on his way to Lucy's cottage, "She dwelt among the untrodden ways" presents a male speaker who sees Lucy from afar. The language of the poem seems to imply that the speaker does not actually know Lucy personally. The speaker knows that "She lived unknown, and few could know / When Lucy ceased to be" (ll. 9-10). Lucy lived alone near the River Dove without any human contact. Wordsworth shows that even though no one else knew where Lucy lived or who she was, the speaker did. It can be seen as an obsession, yet the speaker is part of the "very few" to have known Lucy and can remember her.

In the final stanza, the speaker states: "When Lucy ceased to be; / But she is in her grave, and, oh, / The difference to me!" (ll. 10-12). The speaker had a one-sided love in which he saw Lucy, but Lucy did not see him. Why is he the only one to notice Lucy, when no one else did? The male speaker as a poet notices things that other people don't. Lucy is "half hidden from the eye!" (l. 6). As a poet, Wordsworth shows his readers that he understands these desires.

As in the previous "Lucy Poems," Wordsworth shows his love of nature and the speaker's love of Lucy in "I travelled among unknown men." The speaker does not realize how much England meant to him until he left because of the beautiful scenery and the mountain where he felt this desire for something or someone. In the final stanza, the speaker mentions Lucy, someone whom he left behind in England. England is used as an analogy for the speaker to realize his unrequited love for Lucy.

As the poem continues, the speaker vows that once he arrives in England again, he will never leave. England is where his beloved Lucy is. The speaker states that "still I seem / To love thee more and more" (ll. 7-8). It is not just England but Lucy that the speaker loves "more and more." In the final stanza, the speaker remembers England being the place where Lucy played and the last place she saw before she died: "The bowers where Lucy played; / And thine too is the last green field / That Lucy's eyes surveyed" (ll. 14-16). This is why the speaker does not want to leave England, because Lucy is buried there.

In the title of the poem, the word “unknown,” is an important key word. The speaker did not recognize this “unknown” feeling was, love for Lucy. Travelling to other places has made him realize that what he was looking for what was right there. The speaker does not want to admit his mistake and uses England as a cover to express his love for Lucy.

At first, the speaker is afraid of showing his feelings for Lucy and getting close to her. Is he afraid of getting hurt or hurting Lucy? Walz suggests: “The physical and emotional distance from which the persona views Lucy serves to protect him just as it does Lucy” (25). The distance that the speaker puts between himself and Lucy protects him from the fear of losing her. In all of the “Lucy Poems,” the speakers are not seen getting close to Lucy physically or emotionally. Though death is inevitable, if the speakers get too close to Lucy, she will end up dying. Lucy is like a flower that is taken out of its natural environment that dies. Wordsworth shows that death is part of the natural cycle in order for new re-growth, which continues the cycle of nature.

Wordsworth specifically mentions the connection between humans and nature in his poem “Three years she grew in sun and shower.” Nature thinks that Lucy is the most beautiful thing that she has ever seen and wishes to make Lucy a part of nature. Lucy is taken by Nature and nurtured until she has grown into a beautiful flower:

Then Nature said "A lovelier flower
On earth was never sown;

This child I to myself will take;
 She shall be mine, and I will make
 A lady of my own. (ll. 2-6)

Nature promises to give Lucy anything she wants if she agrees to be part of Nature itself. Lucy will be part of the rocks, earth, heaven, the glades and bower, mountain springs, the clouds, the trees and the storms. Nature expects Lucy to fully enjoy Nature for all its beauty and worth.

In the final stanza, Nature states that her work is complete because Lucy has become a part of Nature. However, unfortunate events take place and the speaker takes over to tell of Lucy's death: "She died, and left to me / This heath, this calm and quiet scene; / The memory of what has been" (ll. 39-41). Lucy dies when Nature has finished her work and the speaker believes the calm scene that Lucy left behind is something he can enjoy with the beautiful memories after her death.

In contrast to the other "Lucy Poems," the male speaker does not tell readers about Lucy in "Three years she grew in sun and shower." It is through Nature readers know who Lucy is because the speaker has very few lines compared to Nature, who takes over after the first line. Nature seems to prevent the speaker from getting too close to Lucy. The only thing the speaker does is stand by and watch as Lucy becomes a part of Nature. Nature is beautiful, yet she seems to have control over the speaker and Lucy. This is Wordsworth's way of showing that nature can be beautiful but it also has its ugly side.

To illustrate Nature's unpleasant side, Lucy dies as soon as she reaches the age of maturity. Though the cause of Lucy's death is unknown, the speaker does not blame Nature. Rather, the speaker finds consolation in the beautiful scene that Lucy has left behind. James G. Taaffe, author of "Poet and Lover in Wordsworth's 'Lucy Poems,'" observes that "[t]he lover realizes how appropriate it is for one who is as frail and beautiful as a violet, but who is, after all, a violet, to exist immortally as part of the natural cycle" (177). Lucy has become part of the natural cycle, and the speaker understands that the cycle of nature is that with life, there is death.

Unlike the other "Lucy Poems" that specifically mention Lucy's name, "A slumber did my spirit seal" is the only "Lucy Poem" that does not refer to Lucy by name. The poem focuses on the death of Lucy and the grief of the speaker. The poem begins with a speaker who has been in "a slumber" that has sealed his spirit. Though it is not specified who this woman is in the poem, scholars presumed that the "she" is Lucy. The speaker goes on to state how he felt a "slumber" has blinded him from seeing the reality of Lucy's death. He has been in a dream-like state in which he is not afraid of human fears. The "human fear" implies the human emotion, which is humankind's weakness. The speaker accepts the idea that if he is in a "slumber," then he can forget about mortality.

In the next few lines, the speaker mentions how he felt that Lucy would never age: "She seemed a thing that could not feel / The touch of earthly years" (ll. 3-4). The death of Lucy came as a surprise for the speaker because he felt

that Lucy would always be full of youth and life. As the speaker continues to the second stanza, he tells readers that Lucy is dead. He implies that Lucy cannot hear or see anything because she is surrounded by “rocks and stones and trees” (l. 8). Though it is a time of grief and sadness, for Wordsworth this can be seen as a good thing since Lucy is becoming part of nature buried in the earth.

The speaker learns that bad things can happen in a beautiful world. Between the two stanzas, the speaker tries to hide the fact that his love, Lucy, is dead. This shows the pain and torment that he endures in which he tries to live without Lucy, but it keeps getting harder for him when he realizes that she is dead. This is a contrast to Lucy, who used to be full of life and energy but now is “motionless without force.”

In contrast to the speaker’s earlier notion of having no human fears, “had” is in the past tense, which signifies that the speaker changed his perceptions. The speaker is learning how to cope with his emotions though he is still reticent because he does not grieve openly about the death of Lucy. Wordsworth does not mention Lucy by name, because now Lucy is part of nature. As Walz suggests: “The poet portrays Lucy as a form of *terra generix*, but dehumanizes Lucy even more than in the other poems by taking away her name. In this poem the persona assimilates the power of reducing Lucy to an inanimate object by portraying her as having lost her will, consciousness and sense as a part of nature” (34). Though Lucy is not seen as an individual but part of nature, it is

possible the speaker does not mention Lucy by name because it brings pain to him when he thinks about her.

It is not just the death of women that Wordsworth writes about. In his collection of “Matthew Poems,” he writes about the loss of Matthew and his daughter. Particularly the poem “The Two April Mornings” explores death and the cycle of nature. In “The Two April Mornings,” the narrator recalls his memory of a schoolmaster named Matthew. The narrator mourns the death of Matthew:

A village schoolmaster was he,
 With hair of glittering grey;
 As blithe a man as yon could see
 On a spring holiday. (ll. 5-8)

Matthew is also a teacher to the narrator. He teaches him about life, and the narrator sees him as a man of wisdom. The narrator appreciates nature and understands that even in the beauty of nature, there are deaths.

Wordsworth wants to show readers the beauty of nature through the eyes of the narrator. Throughout the poem, as the two companions walk through the blades of grass to the church-yard, the narrator notices nature. From the beautiful sun in the morning sky to the slopes of corn in the fields, the narrator sees the beauty of nature. Anne Kostelanetz, author of “Wordsworth’s ‘Conversations’: A Reading of ‘The Two April Mornings’ and ‘The Fountain,’” believes that the narrator sees nature for all its beauty and worth:

On a deeper level than the literal, Wordsworth uses the commonplace images of a spring day to convey the narrator's idea of nature as essentially joyful and fertile. The sun *is* "bright and red," gay in its own right. And the rills are "streaming" in the sun: the vital processes of nature are taking place before the narrator's eyes. The exuberant, joyful mood of the travelers is present in nature itself and not just projected upon it. (45)

As the narrator and Matthew travel along, the narrator grows excited to pass by the beautiful scenery: "We travelled merrily, to pass / A day among the hills" (ll. 11-12). However, these images of nature are only from the narrator's point of view. Matthew stays quiet in the background until he stops to look at the mountain top. Kostelanetz notes that Matthew has the opportunity to enjoy nature, but he ends up rejecting it: "Thus, Matthew, in satisfying his human need for particularity, definition and order, has rejected the very essence of nature—the eternal cycle of joy and vitality, the constant possibility of spontaneous delight in the beauty of being" (47). Even with this beautiful background, Matthew discards nature. Yet, Matthew does not completely dismiss the thought of nature; he has his own idea of nature in his subconscious. He compares his daughter's voice to that of a nightingale: "And then she sang; —she would have been / A very nightingale" (ll. 35-36). She is a natural creature in nature whose song is immortal.

The word “two” is important in the poem because it shows that no matter how much two things are alike, they are not the same thing. When Matthew sees the young girl who resembles his daughter, for a moment he is drawn into her natural beauty. Matthew describes the girl as “A blooming Girl, whose hair was wet / With points of morning dew” (ll. 43-44). His description of the girl shows that Matthew wants to open up to the idea of nature, yet he is uncertain. He could not stop looking at the girl because of the similarity. Matthew says to the narrator: “I looked at her, and looked again: / And did not wish her mine!” (ll. 55-56). He knows that there can never be anyone who can replace his daughter. Even after the death of Matthew’s daughter, he remembers her through his memories like the narrator remembers Matthew. With the death of Matthew, the narrator imagines Matthew as part of nature. Kostelanetz mentions that “[t]he concluding stanza of the poem reaffirms the narrator’s view that man can join in the joyous repetitions of nature by showing that Matthew, in his very dignity and sorrow, is part of the eternal cycle of nature. The narrator remembers Matthew not as separated from but as part of nature” (47). Finally in death, Matthew can be part of the natural cycle:

Matthew is in his grave, yet now,
Methinks, I see him stand,
As at that moment, with a bough
Of wilding in his hand. (ll. 57–60)

Wordsworth shows readers that nature is the eternal cycle of joy and vitality. He knows that there are things in life that prevent humans from enjoying nature.

Wordsworth uses the narrator and Matthew to balance the needs of humans and to see the joy in nature. The narrator is a poet who expresses his thoughts and fond memories of Matthew and uses nature as a consolation in which he believes Matthew is finally at rest. Wordsworth shows readers through the narrator that he is capable of having intense feelings, whether they are through the death of a woman or man.

John Danby, author of *The Simple Wordsworth: Studies in the Poems 1797–1807*, disagrees with Kostelanetz's theory that Matthew rejects nature. He observes that Matthew merely does "not wish her mine" for the fear of having to experience loss once more: "He is not looking for a substitute for his dead daughter; nor is he seeing in the beauty of the living a compensation for the withdrawn beauty of the dead. . . . The words might mean, 'I did not wish her mine, to undergo all the risk of loss again.' Or maybe Matthew did not wish her his because no person can take the place of another" (86-87). Matthew does not wish to go through mourning process over again.

Danby's argument raises a legitimate issue, that Matthew does not want to repeat the process of pain caused by death. With the death of his daughter, Matthew does not see the beauty of nature as the narrator does. As Danby suggests, Matthew does not want to go through the risk of loss again. The pain is not worth it anymore. Danby's theory reflects all of the male speakers in

Wordsworth's poems of loss. The male speakers do not want to go through the pain and prefer to live in the past memories of their deceased loved ones because it helps suppress any future thoughts of having to lose anyone else.

While the Matthew and Lucy poems discuss separation from Matthew or Lucy, the "Matthew Poems" show that loss cannot be replaced. When Matthew sees the girl in the church-yard, a part of him grows hope. Yet, he knows that his daughter is dead and that she cannot be replaced. Wordsworth wants to show readers the balance between humans and nature. He uses the narrator in "The Two April Mornings" as one who sees beauty in nature and Matthew as someone who represses nature because of the hurt and loss that nature has caused him. The narrator of "The Two April Mornings" and the speakers in the "Lucy Poems" see Matthew and Lucy becoming one with nature, and the idea helps assure them that Matthew and Lucy can be part of nature.

Loss is an important theme in the Matthew and Lucy poems as well as "The Ruined Cottage." All of these poems show that death is hard for the grieving speakers. Whether it is through storytelling or memories, all of the speakers that Wordsworth creates try to cope with the pain of losing loved ones.

Chapter 3: LOVE AND THE DEATH OF WOMEN IN LORD BYRON'S POETRY

Unlike Wordsworth, who creates characters who get through the pain of loss with the beauty of nature, Lord Byron constructs characters who indulge in grief and guilt after the death of women. Byron created the "Byronic Hero" as a dark, brooding character who is flawed with a troubled past and is consumed with guilt, which is part of his persona. In *Manfred*, the protagonist, Manfred, is an example of the Byronic Hero because he suffers from guilt following the loss of his love, Astarte. Manfred's problem is not just the death of Astarte, but that he is half a deity and half mortal:

But we, who name ourselves its sovereigns, we,
Half dust, half deity, alike unfit
To sink or soar, with our mix'd essence make
A conflict of its elements, and breathe
The breath of degradation and of pride,
Contending with low wants and lofty will,
Till our mortality predominates,
And men are what they name not to themselves. (I.ii.300-07).⁵

With Manfred, Byron shows how humans are consistently conflicted between moral and immoral situations. Humans let their humiliations surpass their pride which creates an imbalance between good and evil. For Manfred, immortality is a curse because he continually lives with a troubled past. The Byronic Hero as

⁵ *Manfred* is a dramatic verse and will be cited using act, scene, and line number.

Byron creates him contributes to Byron's qualities as a poet who suffers because of love.

Byron uses *Manfred* to develop issues about guilt and mortality. The poem takes place in a dark, gothic gallery. Manfred is upset about the loss of his love, Astarte. Since he is a Byronic hero, he has the qualities that make him doomed by fate to destroy those he loves. It is unclear in the poem whether Manfred actually had anything to do with the death of Astarte because he wants to forget. What does Manfred want to forget exactly? Does he want to forget Astarte completely or the guilt about losing her? Why would Manfred want to forget someone he loves? When a bereaved lover is mourning, he or she wants to keep the memories of his or her deceased lover. Manfred goes as far as summoning seven spirits to help him forget. The spirits will give Manfred anything he desires except forgetfulness. In the end, Manfred sees his love Astarte in a spiritual form and later dies.

When he sees Astarte's ghost, Manfred immediately goes into shock: "To look upon the same— Astarte! — No, / I cannot speak to her— but bid her speak— / Forgive me or condemn me" (II.iv.473-75). Manfred cannot speak to Astarte because he is shocked with her sudden appearance. Manfred then tells the ghost of Astarte that he has endured much pain after her death:

Astarte! my beloved! speak to me;
 I have so much endured— so much endure—
 Look on me! the grave hath not changed thee more

Than I am changed for thee. Thou lovèdst me
 Too much, as I loved thee: we were not made
 To torture thus each other, though it were
 The deadliest sin to love as we have loved. (II.iv.487-93)

Throughout the poem, Manfred indulges in self-pity. He continues this when he sees the ghost of Astarte. Astarte only says his name, but Manfred is overwhelmed with seeing Astarte and asks if they will meet again. Astarte's only response is "farewell." In the midst of seeing Astarte, the only thing on Manfred's mind is himself. He wants to get rid of his guilt so that he can ease the tension that has been with him from the beginning.

The unrequited love between Manfred and Astarte seems to allude to Byron's own relationship with his half sister, Augusta Leigh. Emily Bernhard Jackson, author of "Manfred's Mental Theater and the Construction of Knowledge," observes:

Versions may be exchanged (so that, for example, the Manfred calling up spirits in act I may be accepted as Manfred, there being no analogue in Byron's own life, but the Manfred pleading with Astarte in act III may be understood to be Byron in disguise, given knowledge of his affair with Leigh), but in each case the Manfred selected is one of two available versions, and accepting one means disregarding another, equally valid candidate. (804)

Bernhard Jackson's idea that Manfred is partly a depiction of Byron validates the reading of the unrequited love between Astarte and Manfred. Especially in Act III, when Manfred pleads with Astarte, it alludes to Byron's love affair with Augusta. According to Bernhard Jackson, their affair was sinful and it seems to imply that Byron is asking Augusta for forgiveness.

However, Daniel McVeigh, author of "Manfred's Curse," argues that Byron is not Manfred: "Certainly Byron often pitied himself as cursed in some measure like Manfred; he experienced much of life and death with deep anguish. Yet, he never became so entrapped in his *Angst* as his Romantic projection does" (607). McVeigh continues to suggest that Manfred and Astarte are not depictions of Byron and Augusta: "Yet Astarte is not Augusta, any more than Manfred is in any simple sense Byron" (611). Bernhard Jackson's theory complicates the idea that Manfred represents Byron. It is possible that Byron wanted to create a persona in which he shows his readers the pain and suffering he endured being in love with Augusta. Manfred is a reflection of Byron because both Manfred and Byron are unsuccessful in love.

Additionally, Byron illustrates to readers that Manfred can be seen as a striving poet. In the poem, Manfred uses his powers to conjure spirits in order to help him forget. Byron demonstrates with Manfred that forgetfulness does not happen immediately. It is not just forgetfulness that Byron emphasizes, but rather the broken heart. The suffering and pain after losing a loved one will not heal magically like Manfred hopes the spirits will make happen.

In contrast to Manfred, the Chamois hunter presents a different aspect of life. He lives away from society in the Alps and lives life to the fullest. Manfred sees how the Chamois hunter lives, but does not try to learn from him, and in the end, Manfred dies. His final remark to the Abbot is: "Old man! 't is not so difficult to die" (III.iv.151). Death is a cruel fate for most people, but for Manfred, he can finally be at peace.

Byron builds on the theme of love and loss for his cousin Margaret, in the poem, "On the death of a young lady." In the first stanza, the tone of the poem is sad:

HUSH'D are the winds, and still the evening gloom,
 Not e'en a zephyr wanders through the grove,
 Whilst I return to view my Margaret's tomb,
 And scatter flowers on the dust I love. (1-4)

Since Byron was attending school, he did not know Margaret died until later. The image of scattering flowers on a grave creates a gloomy tone in which Byron remembers the love that he will always have for Margaret.

Like Wordsworth, Byron admires beauty. Wordsworth sees the beauty of women in nature, while Byron sees the beauty of women on their own. In his diary of 1821, Byron mentions how Margaret was, "one of the most beautiful of evanescent beings. I have long forgotten the verse; but it would be difficult for me to forget her—her dark eyes—her long eye-lashes—her completely Greek cast of face and figure!" (377). At the end of his entry, Byron mentions how "she looked

as if she had been made out of a rainbow—all beauty and peace” (377). Even after Margaret is dead, Byron still believes she is beautiful.

In “On the death of a young lady,” Byron mentions his visit to Margaret’s tomb. He mourns her death and wants to know why the “King of Terrors” took her:

The King of Terrors seized her as his prey,
Not worth nor beauty have her life redeem’d
Oh! Could that King of Terrors pity feel,
Or Heaven reverse the dread decrees of fate. (ll. 7-10)

Byron wants the Heavens to reverse their fate and bring Margaret back. He emphasizes that even the angels wept while taking Margaret to her enclosure: “And weeping angels lead her to those bowers / Where endless pleasures virtuous deeds repay” (ll. 15-16).

Though Margaret is dead, Byron will always remember Margaret’s beauty and warm affection: “Yet is remembrance of those virtues dear, / Yet fresh the memory of that beautiful face; / Still they call forth my warm affection’s tear” (ll. 21-23). As Byron remembers Margaret, he continues to cry. Byron expresses himself as a poet through the pain he endured after Margaret’s death.

Continuing with the theme of love, Byron writes about two lovers who are separated in “When we two parted.” The male speaker is torn after a separation from his lover that involved tears and heartache:

When we two parted

In silence and tears,
 Half broken-hearted
 To Sever for years,
 Pale grew thy cheek and cold,
 Colder thy kiss. (ll. 1-6)

“Pale” and “cold” emphasize that the lover is dead. This implies that either the lover is dead or the cause of separation feels like death. There were warnings but the speaker chose to ignore them: “The dew of the morning / Sunk chill on my brow— / It felt like the warning” (ll. 9-11).

Further in the poem, the speaker mentions the shame he feels when he hears his lover’s name, as though he has something to hide:

They name thee before me,
 A knell to mine ear;
 A shudder comes o’er’me—
 Why wert thou so dear? (ll. 17-20)

It may be that the speaker’s lover was a married woman. This resembles Byron’s relationship with Lady Frances Webster, who had an affair with Byron but broke off the relationship. The mention of “they” who did not know of him implies her family: “They know not I knew thee, / Who knew thee too well: / Long, long shall I rue thee” (ll. 21-23).

In the final stanza, the speaker confirms that they had a secret relationship: “In secret we met— / In silence I grieve,” (ll. 25-26). Since their

relationship was unknown, the speaker cannot come out and grieve openly. If they should ever meet again, the speaker wants to know if he should greet his love “[w]ith silence and tears” (l. 32). Shame and sin prevent these two lovers from openly expressing their feelings.

Similar to “When we two parted,” the poem “And thou art dead, as young and fair” does not specifically mention who the deceased lover is. Many critics believe this poem is about John Edleston, a choirboy for whom Byron had an infatuation. The death of the lover has brought suffering and pain to the speaker: “And thou art dead, as young and fair / As aught of mortal birth” (ll. 1-2). This poem is also Byron’s way of expressing how fast youth goes and how soon people die. The speaker states that he never felt this tremendous amount of love for anyone else:

'T is Nothing that I lov'd so well.
 Yet did I love thee to the last
 As fervently as thou,
 Who didst not change through all the past,
 And canst not alter now. (ll. 18-22)

The love between the speaker and his deceased lover was so strong that the speaker feels he will never experience this kind of love again.

Like Wordsworth, Byron incorporates nature. Byron describes the weather and leaves that fall to the ground to accentuate the passing of time: “The leaves must drop away, / And yet it were a greater grief / To watch it withering, leaf by

leaf" (ll. 40-42). The speaker stares as the leaves start to fall on the earth where his lover is buried. There is also much emphasis on decay and death to show readers the image of the deceased figure: "That all those charms have pass'd away, / I might have watch'd through long decay" (ll. 35-36).

Further in the poem, the speaker tells readers that he is too devastated to cry. The only thing the speaker wants is his lover:

As once I wept, if I could weep,
 My tears might well be shed,
 To think I was not near to keep
 One vigil o'er thy bed;
 To gaze, how fondly! on thy face,
 To fold thee in a faint embrace. (ll. 55-60)

Until the day they reunite, the speaker's days will be filled with darkness and misery: "Through dark and dread Eternity / Returns again to me" (ll. 69-70).

The speaker tries to remember the good memories of having his lover with him: "The better days of life were ours; / The worst can be but mine" (ll. 28-29).

The good memories that the speaker and his lover shared are the better part of life, and he will have to continue on without these good days, which are the "worst" to come.

Similar to "And thou art dead, as young and fair," scholars believe that the title of the poem, "To Thyrza" includes a woman's name, but refers to a man. It seems to be an elegy for John Edleston who was a choirboy at Trinity College

and two years younger than Byron. In the first few lines of the poem, the speaker mentions the “truth” that might have been said: “Without a stone to mark the spot / And say, what Truth might well have said” (ll. 1-2). This implies the truth about for whom the poem is written, and if the speaker and his lover did not have something to mark the spot, the truth would never have been told. The speaker continues to say: “Ours too the glance none saw beside / The smile none else might understand / The whisper’d thought of hearts allied. . .” (ll. 29-31). A smile could mean little to anyone else, but to the speaker and his lover it was their connection. The speaker and his deceased lover have a secret that none could understand:

The kiss, so guiltless and refined,
That Love each warmer wish forbore;
Those eyes proclaim’d so pure a mind,
Even Passion blush’d to plead for more. (ll. 33-36)

The speaker remembers how pure his lover’s mind was and the passion they shared.

In “Chasms in Connections: Byron Ending (in) *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* 1 and 2,” Paul Elledge argues that: “To Thyrza,” is an elegy for John Edleston since it was composed within two days after his death:

Such amorous gestures—three of them mentioned and the fourth implicit in Byron's elegy to Edleston, "To Thyrza," composed two days after he learned of the death—self-sufficient and restricted,

define sensuality as the relational dimension that signified more than it satisfied for Edleston and Byron. . . . By its limited expressive options, their stimulating physical play pointed toward its own dispensability under the pressures of other priorities in that "purity" of passion that Byron believed he and his friend shared. (139)

"To Thyrza" mentions the pure mind of the speaker's lover and this supports Elledge's theory that this poem is about John Edleston and the close friendship he and Byron shared. Byron felt his relationship with Edleston could be considered pure, because it avoided anything physical, as Elledge explains: "Consequently, Byron can recover in 2.96 an essence of the association, some distillation of its purity, precisely because it is unrestrained and undistracted by physical presence" (139).

In the final stanza, the speaker struggles through the mourning process of losing his love. He hopes that he can move on:

Teach me—too early taught by thee!
 To bear, forgiving and forgiven:
 On earth thy love was such to me;
 It fain would form my hope in heaven! (53-56)

The love that the speaker and his lover shared was everything the speaker needed. The speaker hopes that in Heaven they can meet again.

Similar to “To Thyrza,” which is an elegy for John Edleston, Byron writes a poetic letter to his sister Augusta that appears to be an elegy for their unrequited love. Though Augusta was not dead when Byron wrote “Epistle to Augusta,” being separated feels like death. Byron incorporates nature to get through the pain of loss into “Epistle to Augusta” like Wordsworth does in “Tintern Abbey.”

However, the way the speaker in Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey” sees nature is vastly different from the way Byron portrays it in “Epistle to Augusta.” In “Tintern Abbey,” the speaker revisits Tintern Abbey after five years and realizes Tintern Abbey is different now in adulthood than when he visited it at youth. When the speaker was younger, he remembered the pain of mourning, but he now realizes that nature will never “betray the heart that loved her”:

Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompence. For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity. (ll. 87-91)

Though he cannot return to the past, the speaker can look at nature in a mature way. The speaker senses the presence of something more subtle, yet powerful, as he sees

A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still

A lover of the meadows and the woods. (ll. 102-05)

For these reasons, nature is where the speaker feels in his heart and soul a “moral being.” The speaker wishes that other people could see nature as nurturing.

Unlike the speaker in “Tintern Abbey,” the speaker in “To Augusta” feels that nature is keeping him away from his lover: “Mountains and seas divide us, but I claim / No tears, but tenderness to answer mine” (ll. 3-4). The speaker feels that even though he is separated from his lover, no mountain or sea can separate them. In contrast to “Tintern Abbey” where nature is guiding, Byron asks nature to comply:

The world is all before me; I but ask
Of Nature that with which she will comply—
It is but in her summer’s sun to bask,
To mingle with the quiet of her sky. (ll. 81-84)

Wordsworth would tell Byron: “nature never did betray / the heart that loved her” (ll. 122-23). However for Byron, it is not nature he loves, but Augusta.

These two poets write about their respective sisters and the issue of loss. Wordsworth tells his sister, Dorothy, about his travels through Tintern Abbey. He hopes she will not make the same mistakes that he did in the past. Wordsworth wants to leave his knowledge of what he knows for his sister when he leaves.

“Epistle to Augusta” is Byron’s elegy to Augusta:

It is the same, together or apart,

From life's commencement to its slow decline
 We are entwined—let death come slow or fast,
 The tie which bound the first endures the last! (ll. 125-128)

Byron is open about his feelings and wants to build on nature to get through the pain:

Of struggles, happiness at times would steal,
 And for the present, I would not benumb
 My feelings farther—Nor shall I conceal
 That with all this I still can look around,
 And worship Nature with a thought profound. (ll. 116-120)

Byron departs from Wordsworth's idea of nature. Byron uses nature to help get his mind off loss. The storms and rocks mirror his pain: "If my inheritance of storms hath been / In other elements, and on the rocks / Of perils, overlook'd or unforeseen" (ll. 17-19). Byron's speaker does not feel the love of nature and does not believe nature is nurturing like Wordsworth's speaker. Wordsworth creates a speaker who has not just grown physically but emotionally. "Tintern Abbey" is about the reconstruction of beliefs about nature and humanity: "The still, sad music of humanity" (l. 91). "Epistle to Augusta" is Byron's realization that nature cannot heal the pain of separation. Rather, he feels as if nature is another division between himself and his love for Augusta.

Byron wants readers to see the pain of separation in his poems about the death of women or men. Poems such as: "When we two parted," "On the death

of a young lady," "And thou art dead, as young and fair" and "To Thyrza," are all about the suffering bereaved lover. For Byron, losing a loved one does not necessarily mean he or she is dead, as he shows in "Epistle to Augusta." Being apart from a lover is just as painful as death.

Chapter 4: THE POETICS OF EDGAR ALLAN POE'S DEATH OF A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN

As Wordsworth sees beauty in nature and Byron believes beauty is the love he feels for someone, Edgar Allan Poe believes there is nothing more beautiful than the death of a beautiful woman. As he states in "The Philosophy of Composition," "When it most closely allies itself to *Beauty*: the death, then, of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world — and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover" (122). The beauty of women captures Poe in a way that he feels it must be like an art form. In order to preserve this beauty with death, Poe creates art. Poe wants to show his readers that death is not the end: "Now I designate Beauty as the province of the poem, merely because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring from direct causes—that objects should be attained through means best adapted from their attainment—no one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation alluded to *is most readily* attained in the poem" (118).

Poe illustrates how he captures the death of a beautiful woman in art in his short story "The Oval Portrait." A young bride dies and her "spirit" is transferred into a portrait. The artist is so consumed with his work that he does not realize what he paints. In the end, he sees that he has painted the picture of his deceased bride. Bronfen suggests that the artist merged his two "brides" together:

The story the narrator reads reveals that the model, “a maiden of rarest beauty,” had an unhappy marriage with a painter because of his “passionate, studious, austere” devotion to his first “bride, his Art” and her jealousy of his rival. The conflict between his two brides provokes in the painter a desire to merge the two, to transfer his living wife into the wife he already had, to exchange the disturbing odd couple with a transparent unity—the perfect resemblance. (111-12)

The artist is so obsessed with his work that he does not continue looking at his model. Rather than have two “wives,” the artist combines his two loves. Though the poet suggested that the young bride died from exhaustion, the portrait shows the “life” it took from the young bride.

In fact, Poe wants his readers to see how the beauty of women can become more than art. To Poe, beauty excites and helps elevate the soul and maintains excitement. In “The Philosophy of Composition,” Poe states: “When, indeed, men speak of Beauty, they mean, precisely, not a quality, as is supposed, but an effect—they refer, in short, just to that intense and pure elevation of *soul*—*not* of intellect, or of heart—upon which I have commented, and which is experienced in consequence of contemplating ‘the beautiful’” (118). Poe uses words such as *beautiful* and *poetical* in connection to death. The death and decomposing of a body is nothing that would seem beautiful.

Poe also sees the beauty in death in his poems “Lenore,” “Ulalume,” and “Annabel Lee.” After the deaths of these three women, the male speakers focus on their pains from the loss of the female figure that represents continuity. In Poe’s poems “The Sleeper” and “To One in Paradise,” the speakers have a hard time believing their lovers are dead. In “The Raven,” Lenore’s death brings guilt and grief to the male speaker, who puts himself through self-torture. The speaker repeatedly asks the raven if he will see Lenore again when he knows that the raven’s only reply is “nevermore.” In all of these poems and stories, Poe uses the dying woman to illustrate that a woman’s beauty condemns her to death.

Furthermore, Poe believes that the death of a beautiful woman has its own tone. He states in “The Philosophy of Composition,” “Regarding, then, Beauty as my province, my next question referred to the *tone* of its highest manifestation—and all experience has shown that this tone is one of *sadness*. Beauty of whatever kind, in its supreme development, invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones” (119). Poe incorporates the gothic genre in which his poems take place in graveyard-like settings that builds the suspense and overtone of the death of a beautiful woman. This elevates the tone of the bereaved lover and it is the poetics of the mourning lover that “excites” the soul.

Poe illustrates the “poetics” of a bereaved lover in his poem “Lenore.” With the death of a beautiful young woman named Lenore, her fiancé, Guy De Vere, is emotional. Poe uses Guy De Vere to express himself as a poet who can

understand art, beauty and death. In the first stanza, the speaker asks Guy De Vere why he does not mourn the death of Lenore. The speaker says to De Vere: “And, Guy De Vere, hast thou no tear? –weep now or never more!” (l. 3). De Vere replies to the speaker and the other people at the funeral and accuses them of having liked Lenore for her wealth. When she needed them the most, they turned their backs on her. De Vere exclaims: “Wretches! ye loved her for her wealth and hated her for her pride, / And when she fell in feeble health, ye blessed her—that she died!” (ll. 8-9). De Vere continues to accuse the people at the funeral for looking at Lenore disapprovingly or defaming her: “By you—by yours, the evil eye,—by yours, the slanderous tongue / That did to death the innocence that died, and died so young?” (ll. 11-12). The pain of loss causes De Vere to blame others.

Further in the poem, the speaker says that De Vere is upset because Lenore died before he could marry her: “Leaving thee wild for the dear child that should have been thy bride—“(l. 16). De Vere replies to the speaker telling him that he is happy that Lenore is in a better place:

Avaunt! to-night my heart is light. No dirge will I upraise,
 But waft the angel on her flight with a paeon of old days!
 Let no bell toll!—lest her sweet soul, amid its hallowed mirth,
 Should catch the note, as it doth float up from the damned Earth.
 To friends above, from fiends below, the indignant ghost is riven—
 From Hell unto a high estate far up within the Heaven—

From grief and groan, to a golden throne, beside the King of
Heaven. (ll. 20-26)

De Vere does not wish to sing a song of mourning because when Lenore goes to Heaven, she will be on a “golden throne” next to God.

According to John Broderick, author of “Poe’s Revisions of ‘Lenore,’” De Vere’s mood changes from angry to happy because Lenore has “escaped” to a better place. Broderick observes that “[r]esponses follow in which the friends modify their original utterance somewhat and Guy De Vere alters his drastically—from anger to happy acquiescence in Lenore’s escape, although some reverberations of the earlier mood remain” (507). At first, De Vere accuses his friends of being hypocrites, but realizes that this is a funeral for remembering Lenore.

Nevertheless, the speaker admits that the mourners are at fault and they know that they have sinned: “Peccavimus; but rave not thus! and let a Sabbath song / Go up to God so solemnly the dead may feel no wrong!” (ll. 13-14). Though the people at the funeral admit their mistake, the speaker tells De Vere he should stop with the accusations because everyone at the funeral knows Lenore was a sweet person. Broderick suggests that the other mourners at the funeral feel De Vere is so overwhelmed with the death of Lenore that he is trying to distract himself from the pain: “In the third stanza the friends affect pious humility before shifting attention to the beauties of the dead girl and suggesting that De Vere’s outburst stems from the distraction of grief” (507).

Like “Lenore,” “Ulalume” focuses on the male speaker who mourns the loss of his lover. The poem opens on a “lonesome October night.” As the speaker starts to wander into the woodland of Weir, he recalls one of his most memorable years in Auber: “It was down by the dank tarn of Auber, / In the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir” (ll. 9-10). The woodlands of Weir haunt the speaker’s mind as he remembers what happened one year ago. From the start of the poem, Poe sets up the gothic setting for the distressed speaker’s emotions.

These overwhelming emotions allow the speaker a distraction from his heavy heart and start his drifting away from reality. The speaker realizes why he is at Weir. It is the place where Ulalume is buried: “’Tis the vault of thy lost Ulalume!’ / Then my heart it grew ashen and sober” (ll. 82-83). The speaker tortures himself by coming to Ulalume’s grave on the same night she was buried exactly a year before: “That I brought a dread burden down here— / On this night of all nights in this year, / Ah what demon has tempted me here?” (ll. 88-90).

Like Byron’s *Manfred*, the speaker is tortured because of guilt. Though it is unclear if the speaker actually had anything to do with Ulalume’s death, the guilt has continually reminded him that Ulalume is no longer alive. When the speaker asks himself “what demon had tempted him,” he knows that the “demon” is himself. As Daniel McVeigh, author of “*Manfred’s Curse*,” suggests: “*Manfred’s* torture comes not from having loved, but from having destroyed Astarte” (611). The speaker is tortured with the pain of loving Ulalume and losing her.

True to the gothic genre, the poem focuses on decay and deterioration. The same lines from the beginning of the poem are repeated at the end: “As the leaves that were crisped and sere— / The leaves they were withering and sere” (ll. 2-3). When Ulalume died, a part of the speaker died with her. In the last stanza, the speaker finally realizes that it is “October” again. He knew in his subconscious that the time was coming, but did not want to acknowledge it.

However, unlike Wordsworth’s characters, nature does not help ease the pain for the speaker. The speaker is so emotionally conflicted that it is not until the end of the poem that he recognizes where he is. Bronfen suggests, “Poe’s narrators hold on to an intermediary position, balanced between an embrace of death and successful denial or repression of it” (366). All of Poe’s speakers are between the living and the dead. Even if they are physically alive, emotionally, they feel a void. Poe’s male characters believe that the bond between them and their departed lovers is just the beginning of understanding the world beyond life. They use this opportunity to create poetic inscriptions that fill the emptiness left with loss.

Unlike “Ulalume,” in which the speaker is driven by guilt and torment, the speaker in “Annabel Lee” blames everyone but himself for her death. The poem starts off with a speaker who mentions a “kingdom by the sea,” which implies a sandcastle. Though the speaker and Annabel Lee were young, he believes that their love was and still is real. As the poem goes on, the readers find out that Annabel Lee is no longer alive. The speaker blames the angels in Heaven for

taking Annabel Lee's life. The angels were jealous of the relationship between the speaker and Annabel Lee: "The angels, not half so happy in heaven, / Went envying her and me— / Yes!—that was the reason" (ll. 21-23). When the speaker mentions that the angels were jealous, it shows that he has not grown up much, though it is possible that the speaker uses the angels as an excuse to suppress his pain. The speaker feels that even though Annabel Lee is dead, their love is so strong that their souls are entwined.

The love that the speaker had for Annabel Lee is shown in the way he worships her. Poe capitalizes the entirety of Annabel Lee's name, not just its initial letter, a few times in the poem to signify how important she was to the speaker. She was his life: "Of my darling—my darling—my life and my bride" (l. 39). Though Annabel Lee is dead, the speaker feels they will reunite again:

And neither the angels in heaven above,
Nor the demons down under the sea,
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
Of the beautiful ANNABEL LEE. (ll. 30-33)

The speaker believes he will always love Annabel Lee.

This love that the speaker has for Annabel Lee prevents him from moving forward in his life. They both loved the sea, and this is where Annabel Lee now is. When the speaker lies down in the sepulcher by the sea, he feels as if he is lying next to Annabel Lee which helps ease his mind from the pain he feels about losing her.

Like in “Annabel Lee,” the speaker in “The Sleeper” has trouble accepting the death of his lover, Irene. The speaker is in a graveyard and sees that with the blowing of the wind, a rustling is heard from the curtain over Irene’s coffin. He watches Irene “sleeping” in her casket: “Her casement open to the skies / Irene, with her Destinies!” (ll. 17-18). The speaker wants to know what Irene is dreaming in her “deep sleep.” He wonders if Irene is afraid of the shadows that are cast on the curtains, and even though Irene is dead, the speaker does not want to admit that she will never wake up. He talks to her as if she is really sleeping: “Oh, lady bright! can it be right— / This window open to the night?” (ll. 19-20). The speaker knows that she is dead, but tries to convince himself that Irene will awaken and speak to him.

The coffin alludes to the fact that the speaker is in the graveyard where Irene is buried: “The rosemary nods upon the grave” (l. 9). The time of day is at midnight, in the month of June. Once again, Poe uses midnight, the darkest time of day, to depict a sense of darkness for the speaker. The speaker is not afraid of being there alone. His heart is too heavy with sadness for him to notice. Poe reiterates his idea that the beauty of a woman is what condemns her to death. As the speaker mentions, “All Beauty sleeps!” (l. 16). In the final stanza, the speaker wants Irene to be at peace and rest undisturbed for the rest of eternity: “I pray to God that she may lie / Forever with unopened eye” (ll. 43-44). The speaker finally accepts that Irene is dead: “My love, she sleeps! Oh, may her sleep, / As it is lasting, so be deep!” (ll. 46-47).

As in the other poems, the speaker in “To One in Paradise” was deeply in love with his lover: “Thou wast that all to me, love, / For which my soul did pine—“(ll. 1-2). The speaker then starts to compare his affection for his lover with things found in paradise. He describes the green isle of the sea and the fruits and flowers found on an island. The speaker knew that the love he had for his lover was too good to last forever, and now his lover lies in her grave: “Ah, dream too bright to last! . . . / my spirit hovering lies / Mute, motionless, aghast!” (ll. 7-13). The speaker is miserable and feels the pain that is brought on by this loss.

While the first stanza of the poem describes an image of paradise, it is not what it seems. The speaker is suffering and isolated from the rest of the world. The loss of his love is still in his mind, and no matter how hard he tries to move forward with his life, he is still stuck in the past: “A voice from out the Future cries, / ”On! on!”—but o’er the Past” (ll. 10-11). The voice symbolizes the speaker’s inner self. He knows that he needs to continue moving forward and not in the past, but forgetting the past would mean not remembering his lover.

In the third stanza, the speaker repeats “no more” three times. He mentions before: “The light of Life is o’er!” (l. 15). This alludes to the life of his lover. He tries to convince himself that she is gone by repeating “no more” three times. The speaker then continues to say: “And all my hours are trances, / And all my nightly dreams / Are where thy dark eye glances, / And where thy footstep gleams—” (ll. 21-24). The speaker is constantly reminded of his deceased lover and he wants to remember these images of her when she was alive. Though he

has tried to escape to paradise, this is no paradise for the speaker. He is constantly living in a dream-like state: “And all my days are trances, / And all my nightly dreams” (ll. 21-22).

This particular poem was based on Lord Byron’s relationship with Mary Chaworth. In Eve Morisi’s, “Poe’s ‘To One in Paradise,’” Morisi includes information from T.O. Mabbott who mentions that Lord Byron was Poe’s inspiration for this particular poem: “Indeed, T. O. Mabbott, in his introduction to the poem in his scholarly edition of Poe’s work, informs us that Poe inserted it in his tale ‘The Visionary’ [subsequently called ‘The Assigment’] as the composition of the protagonist—obviously modeled on Lord Byron—who finds his beloved married to an older nobleman” (141-42). Even though Morisi believes that “To One is Paradise” might have been influenced by Lord Byron, she is not completely convinced. Morisi sees the poem as that of a speaker who remembers the happy past with his lover and the tragic ending: “Its four stanzas evolve from the speaker’s recollection of a happy love to its repeal before featuring an imagery of utter despair that climaxes with verbal dissolution” (142). She does not focus the poem on Byron’s relationship and sees the images as something more. The description of the scenery is from the “woman-nature” landscape in which the woman represents nature because she is part of the rebirth and re-growth cycle. The woman is connected to nature and can be perceived as “mother nature” who nurtures and continues humankind. Morisi believes that the fountain symbolizes the purity of the water and is synonymous

with peace: “For beyond its fertile ‘green[ery],’ lively ‘sea,’ and sensuous ‘fruits and flowers’ appealing to the senses . . . [are] the ‘fountain,’ connoting water’s purity or absolving power, and the ‘shrine,’ synonymous with peacefulness” (142). Roy Basler, author of “Byronism in Poe’s ‘To One in Paradise,’” disagrees with Morisi and believes that the poem as a whole is structured on Byron’s relationship with a married woman. Basler believes that “[t]he fountain and shrine with its flowers, however, is an image so closely associated by Byron, not only with ideal love in general but with his own particular, that it could scarcely have failed to catch the imagination of one who made a detailed study of ‘every allusion’ as Poe did” (236). The descriptions are too strongly connected with Byron to be a coincidence.

Yet, reading “To One in Paradise” without having read the article by Mabbott would let readers assume that this was a poem about a speaker that Poe created. The idea that Byron could have influenced Poe gives the poem new meaning. Rather than reading the poem from the point of view of a mourning speaker suffering from the death of his love, it can be read from Byron’s view of being in love with a married woman. Byron finds his lover, Mary Chaworth, married to a rich nobleman, which would cause Byron to assume that she is living “in paradise.” Poe uses the pain of Byron’s experience to develop himself as a poet. He uses the pain and suffering to create a melancholic tone.

In addition to the other poems about the death of a woman, “The Raven” also has a speaker who is tormented with the death of his lover, Lenore. The

speaker tries to ease his pain of loss by reading. Poe uses the books as an image of turning away from reality and toward a literary romance. Reading takes the speaker's mind off Lenore, even if for a moment, and takes him away from reality. Even though he is reading these books, he wishes time would pass more quickly so that the pain he feels will lessen: "Eagerly I wished the morrow; — vainly I had sought to borrow / From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost Lenore" (ll. 9-10). As the fire in the fireplace starts to go out, a part of the speaker dies as well. Lenore died first and the speaker waits for his turn so that he can be reunited with Lenore. Soon, the speaker is distracted with a visitor, a raven. The speaker is amused to have a distraction from his mourning. When the speaker asks if he will see Lenore again, the raven's only reply is "nevermore." The speaker becomes angry at the raven, calling it a "thing of evil" and a "prophet" (l. 85).

In connection with the gothic theme, Poe states in "The Philosophy of Composition" how he first thought of using a parrot rather than a raven: "Here, then, immediately arose the idea of a non-reasoning creature capable of speech, and very naturally, a parrot, in the first instance, suggested itself, but was superseded forthwith by a Raven as equally capable of speech, and infinitely more in keeping with the intended tone" (121-22). A parrot would not have the same effect as a dark, eerie raven. Poe continues: "I had now gone so far as the conception of a Raven, the bird of ill-omen, monotonously repeating the one word "Nevermore" at the conclusion of each stanza in a poem of melancholy

be reunited with Lenore. Another part of him sees the raven as an evil creature: “And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon’s that is dreaming” (l. 105). The speaker feels that the raven is dreaming up evil schemes to bring more pain. In the final stanza, the speaker feels that his soul is trapped beneath the raven’s shadow and it will be lifted “nevermore.”

Why are all the speakers in Poe’s works male? Bronfen states that: “Elias Canetti invokes gendering when he describes the moment of survival as a moment of power and triumph. Horror at the sight of death turns into satisfaction, since the survivor is not himself dead” (65). The sight of death does not bring satisfaction. Rather, it is horror because the grieving male speakers are not dead along with their lovers. With the death of their lovers, the male speakers live the rest of their lives between the living and dead. They are alive in one sense, but mourning the death of a loved one keeps them connected to the dead. In the end, the downfall for the male figures is the death of a lover.

In all of these poems, Poe wants readers to feel the torment and pain that the speakers put themselves through. This is different from how Wordsworth has his characters reticent about their feelings. Wordsworth’s characters use nature as a way of consolation which helps them believe their lover is in a better place. Poe has his characters perform excessive sentiment in which the dark, gothic images relate back to their tormented heart. Poe wants his speakers to express themselves as poets who create depth with their strong emotions about the death of a beautiful woman.

Chapter 5: CONCLUSION

It is language that lifts the soul to heaven; and we more than believe, we know and feel, that, whatever may be the nature of the language of angels, the language of the poet truly interprets their sentiments.

—Blackwood, 1822.⁶

Wordsworth, Byron, and Poe use their male speakers to show readers that they are poets who are able to express intense emotions with the death of a woman. The absent woman represents the pain of losing more than a loved one. These feelings of grief and mourning make poetry that constructs the idea of art.

These poets use the idea of art and gender to build on the theme of melancholy in which the male speakers use their words to express the pain of losing a loved one. The absence of the women makes the men feel powerless because their desires are no longer attainable. Wordsworth, Byron, and Poe show how much gender is an important part of their works. Masculinity does not seem as strong without women, who build the depth and height of power for men.

How do these poets want to be judged when they create male characters who mourn the death of a woman? Andrew George, editor of *The Complete Poetical Works of Wordsworth*, believes that “Artists cannot explain the secret of their art, and yet they can at times reveal to us much that is helpful to an

⁶ From *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron* (London), notes on p. 525.

appreciation of their work. Every artist brings into the world of art a new thing—his own personality—and consequently he must create the taste by which he is to be judged” (xxxviii).⁷ Wordsworth, Byron, and Poe not only want to be seen as poets, but as artists who sculpt works of art and have readers understand who they are as people.

⁷ From “The Biographical Sketch.”

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