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ROMANTIC CONVERSATIONS: THE LAKE SCHOOL OF POETRY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

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.

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,
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.

As a young man, William Wordsworth developed his love of nature and through his poetry he made the beauty of the Lake District legendary. While he was a student he developed an enthusiasm for the French Revolution and was, with other writers such as Coleridge, considered dangerous by his government and spied upon. His radicalism was swiftly dampened in the early 1800s by the bloody events in France culminating in Napoleon's rise to power. By this time he was also influenced by personal distresses; two of his children had died, his brother was drowned at sea and his sister Dorothy had suffered a mental breakdown.

Wordsworth was what can be classed as a first generation Romantic Poet. It is widely advocated that he launched the Romantic Age (together with Coleridge) with the publication of their *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 (which was greeted with hostility by most contemporary critics). From the age of 27 he purposely lived close to Coleridge and much of their work overlaps. His most famous poem, 'I wandered lonely as a cloud', was written in Dove Cottage at Grasmere in 1804, no doubt influenced by his literary relationships. Though great men such as Keats were disappointed by his late conservatism, there is no arguing that he was a remarkably influential poet.

For a thorough introduction to Romanticism, the following two volumes are useful:

R 33 / 18 REF **McCalman, Iain (ed.), *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture 1776 - 1832* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).**

R 14 / 17 **Wu, Duncan (ed.), *Romanticism: An Anthology*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).**

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R 34 W / 52 **Brett, R.L. & A.R. Jones (eds.) *Lyrical Ballads: Wordsworth and Coleridge* (London: Methuen, 1986).**

This volume contains the original format of the 1798 edition, plus the additional 1800 poems and prefaces. It is important to read Wordsworth's poetry in the context of Coleridge to gain a fuller understanding of his work.

R 34 W/1 **Wordsworth, William, *The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth* (Edinburgh: William Paterson, 1882).**

A collection of Wordsworth's poetry.

WEG/R 34/WOR **Wordsworth, William, *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth* (London: Edward Moxon, Son, and Co, 1876).**

One of Gladstone's original books providing an insight to a man who was not simply a poet; this volume presents his writings on political, ethical, critical and literary topics.

R 34 W / 123 **Williams, John, *William Wordsworth: A Literary Life* (London: Macmillan, 1996).**

This book attempts to relate the poetic persona to the circumstances of composition, opening up debates of Wordsworth the radical vs Wordsworth the conservative, and the effects it may have on his work.

R 34 W / 72 **Wordsworth, Dorothy, *Dorothy Wordsworth's Illustrated Lakeland Journals* (Diamond Books, 1991).**

No study of William Wordsworth is complete without reading the prolific journals of his sister, Dorothy.

R 34 W / 113 **Hayden, John O., *William Wordsworth and the Mind of Man: The Poet as Thinker* (Bibli O'Phile Pub. Co., 1992).**

Hayden argues that Wordsworth, while being an emotional poet as many scholars recognize, was very much an intellectual poet as well. In particular, Hayden shows the extent to which Wordsworth was actively involved in pondering eighteenth-century psychology and philosophy.

R 34 W/27 **Gill, Stephen, *Wordsworth's Revisitings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).**

This is a revelatory study of Wordsworth's habits of revision, written by leading Wordsworthian scholar Stephen Gill. It combines close textual analysis with deep biographical knowledge and includes a fresh account of the evolution of *The Prelude* from 1804 to 1839.

R 34 W/149 **Sisman, Adam, *The Friendship: Wordsworth and Coleridge* (London: Harper Perennial, 2007).**

This book explores the legendary friendship - and quarrel - between Wordsworth and Coleridge, debating the reliance they had on one another and exploring whether it would have been better for both if they had not met at all.

R 34 W/152 **Wordsworth, Jonathan, Michael C. Jaye & Robert Woof, *William Wordsworth and the Age of English Romanticism* (New Brunswick; London: Rutgers University Press, co-published with the Wordsworth Trust, 1987).**

This is an exciting volume as it includes copies of manuscripts of Wordsworth and other Romantics and illustrations of primary artifacts used by the poets. The book explores material essential to a grasp of Romanticism; revolutions, the spirit of the age, child as father of the man, the discovery of nature, 'unity entire' and memory, imagination and the sublime.

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