

A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION



The Prelude
1799, 1805, 1850
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

EDITED BY
JONATHAN WORDSWORTH
M. H. ABRAMS, AND STEPHEN GILL

AUTHORITATIVE TEXTS
CONTEXT AND RECEPTION
RECENT CRITICAL ESSAYS

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THE PRELUDE

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The Prelude of 1805, in Thirteen Books[†]

Book First

Introduction: Childhood and School-time

- Oh there is blessing in this gentle breeze,
That blows from the green fields and from the clouds
And from the sky; it beats against my cheek,
And seems half conscious of the joy it gives. 5
O welcome messenger! O welcome friend!
A captive greets thee, coming from a house
Of bondage, from yon city's walls set free,
A prison where he hath been long immured.²
Now I am free, enfranchised and at large,
May fix my habitation where I will. 10
- [10] What dwelling shall receive me, in what vale
Shall be my harbour, underneath what grove
Shall I take up my home, and what sweet stream
Shall with its murmurs lull me to my rest?
The earth is all before me—with a heart 15
- [15] Joyous, nor scared at its own liberty,
I look about, and should the guide I chuse
Be nothing better than a wandering cloud
I cannot miss my way.³ I breathe again—
Trances of thought and mountings of the mind 20
- [20] Come fast upon me. It is shaken off,
As by miraculous gift 'tis shaken off,
That burthen of my own unnatural self,
The heavy weight of many a weary day

† Footnotes to 1805 and 1850 are numbered in a single sequence. When the same note applies to both texts, its superscript number is entered in each text. Notes which apply only to 1805, together with those which apply to both texts, are printed on the left-hand page; notes which apply only to 1850 are printed on the right-hand page. Bracketed marginal entries refer to 1850.

2. Despite the circumstantial detail of his reference to city walls (see also 1850, 87-89, and 1805, VII, 1-4, VIII, 347-53), it is almost certain that Wordsworth was in the Lake District when he wrote these

opening lines. The city, characterized by an allusion to Exodus 13:3—"out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage"—is partly London, partly Goslar; it evokes a pent-up state of mind which Wordsworth had doubtless experienced in both, and from which he now suddenly felt free.

3. A reference to the concluding lines of *Paradise Lost*: "The world was all before them, where to choose / Their place of rest, and providence their guide: / They hand in hand with wandering steps and slow, / Through Eden took their solitary way."

The Prelude of 1850, in Fourteen Books[†]

Book First

Introduction—Childhood and School-time

O there is a blessing in this gentle breeze,
A visitant that while he fans my cheek
Doth seem half-conscious of the joy he brings
From the green fields, and from yon azure sky.
Whate'er his mission, the soft breeze can come 5
To none more grateful than to me;¹ escaped
From the vast city, where I long had pined
A discontented sojourner: now free,
Free as a bird to settle where I will.
What dwelling shall receive me? in what vale 10
Shall be my harbour? underneath what grove
Shall I take up my home? and what clear stream
Shall with its murmur lull me into rest?
The earth is all before me. With a heart
Joyous, nor scared at its own liberty, 15
I look about; and should the chosen guide
Be nothing better than a wandering cloud,
I cannot miss my way.³ I breathe again!
Trances of thought and mountings of the mind
Come fast upon me: it is shaken off, 20
That burthen of my own unnatural self,
The heavy weight of many a weary day

1. There is no manuscript authority for the first edition reading "it," "it," "its," for "he," "he," "his," applied to the breeze in lines 2-5. The substitution was

made in proof, probably by Christopher Wordsworth, Jr., later Bishop of Lincoln, to remove the characteristic but unorthodox Wordsworthian animism.

Not mine, and such as were not made for me. 25
 Long months of peace—if such bold word accord
 [25] With any promises of human life—
 Long months of ease and undisturbed delight
 Are mine in prospect. Whither shall I turn,
 By road or pathway, or through open field, 30
 Or shall a twig or any floating thing
 [30] Upon the river point me out my course?

Enough that I am free, for months to come
 May dedicate myself to chosen tasks,
 May quit the tiresome sea and dwell on shore— 35
 If not a settler on the soil, at least
 To drink wild water, and to pluck green herbs,
 And gather fruits fresh from their native bough.
 Nay more, if I may trust myself, this hour
 Hath brought a gift that consecrates my joy; 40
 For I, methought, while the sweet breath of heaven
 Was blowing on my body, felt within
 [35] A corresponding mild creative breeze,
 A vital breeze which travelled gently on
 O'er things which it had made, and is become 45
 A tempest, a redundant energy,
 Vexing its own creation.⁴ 'Tis a power
 That does not come unrecognised, a storm
 [40] Which, breaking up a long-continued frost,
 Brings with it vernal promises, the hope 50
 Of active days, of dignity and thought,
 Of prowess in an honorable field,⁵
 Pure passions, virtue, knowledge, and delight,
 [45] The holy life of music and of verse.⁶

Thus far, O friend, did I, not used to make 55
 A present joy the matter of my song,
 Pour out that day my soul in measured strains,

4. 1805, 43–47 are found (with line 20, above) in *MS. JJ*; see *MS. Drafts and Fragments*, 1(h), i–iii, below. For the relation of winds to inspiration and a revived creativity in the poetry of Wordsworth, see M. H. Abrams, “The Correspondent Breeze.” “Redundant” 1805, 46; 1850, 37): superabundant, exuberant, superfluous (*Johnson’s Dictionary*).

5. Wordsworth has in mind the writing of the central philosophical section of *The Recluse*, planned in March 1798, but consistently deferred; see *Composition and Texts: 1799, 1805/1850*, Section iii, below.

6. 1805, 1–54 (1850, 1–45), referred to at VII, 4 as Wordsworth’s “glad preamble,” draw on material in *MS. JJ* from Octo-

ber–November 1798 (see 47*n*, above); in its present form, however, the passage seems to have been written on or shortly after November 18, 1799 (see John Alban Finch, “Wordsworth’s Two-Handed Engine,” *Bicentenary Studies*, pp. 1–13). It must originally have been a separate “effusion,” and was not incorporated in *The Prelude* until Wordsworth made a start on the five-book poem in January 1804.

The revisions of 1805, lines 33–54, sound for the first time in the poem the characteristic voice, or tone, of 1850; 1805, lines 33–38 were not cut until the final corrections to *MS. E*, in or after 1839.

Not mine, and such as were not made for me.
 Long months of peace (if such bold word accord
 With any promises of human life), 25
 Long months of ease and undisturbed delight
 Are mine in prospect; whither shall I turn
 By road or pathway, or through trackless field,
 Up hill or down, or shall some floating thing
 Upon the river point me out my course? 30

Dear Liberty! Yet what would it avail
 But for a gift that consecrates the joy?
 For I, methought, while the sweet breath of heaven
 Was blowing on my body, felt within
 A correspondent breeze, that gently moved 35
 With quickening virtue, but is now become
 A tempest, a redundant energy,
 Vexing its own creation⁴ Thanks to both,
 And their congenial powers, that, while they join
 In breaking up a long-continued frost, 40
 Bring with them vernal promises, the hope
 Of active days urged on by flying hours,—
 Days of sweet leisure, taxed with patient thought
 Abstruse, not wanting punctual service high,
 Matins and vespers, of harmonious verse!⁶ 45

Thus, O Friend! did I, not used to make
 A present joy the matter of a song,
 Pour forth that day my soul in measured strains

Even in the very words which I have here
 [50] Recorded. To the open fields I told
 A prophesy; poetic numbers came 60
 Spontaneously, and clothed in priestly robe
 My spirit, thus singled out, as it might seem,
 For holy services. Great hopes were mine:
 [55] My own voice cheered me, and, far more, the mind's
 Internal echo of the imperfect sound— 65
 To both I listened, drawing from them both
 A cheerful confidence in things to come.

Whereat, being not unwilling now to give
 [60] A respite to this passion, I paced on
 Gently, with careless steps, and came erelong 70
 To a green shady place where down I sate
 Beneath a tree, slackening my thoughts by choice
 And settling into gentler happiness.
 [65] 'Twas autumn, and a calm and placid day
 With warmth as much as needed from a sun 75
 Two hours declined towards the west, a day
 With silver clouds and sunshine on the grass,
 And, in the sheltered grove where I was couched,
 [70] A perfect stillness. On the ground I lay
 Passing through many thoughts, yet mainly such 80
 As to myself pertained. I made a choice
 Of one sweet vale whither my steps should turn,
 And saw, methought, the very house and fields
 Present before my eyes;⁷ nor did I fail 85
 To add meanwhile assurance of some work
 Of glory there forthwith to be begun—
 [80] Perhaps too there performed. Thus long I lay
 Cheered by the genial pillow of the earth
 Beneath my head, soothed by a sense of touch
 From the warm ground, that balanced me, else lost 90
 Entirely, seeing nought, nought hearing, save
 When here and there about the grove of oaks
 Where was my bed, an acorn from the trees
 [85] Fell audibly, and with a startling sound.

Thus occupied in mind I lingered here 95
 Contented, nor rose up until the sun
 Had almost touched the horizon; bidding then
 A farewell to the city left behind,⁸

7. The "vale" is Grasmere; Dove Cottage, into which the Wordsworths moved on December 20, 1799, and where they stayed until 1808, was then divided from the lake only by fields.

8. Insofar as Wordsworth had particular city walls in mind, they were those of Goslar, Germany, where he had spent the autumn and winter, 1798–99; see *1805*, VIII, 347–53, below.

That would not be forgotten, and are here
 Recorded: to the open fields I told 50
 A prophecy: poetic numbers came
 Spontaneously to clothe in priestly robe
 A renovated spirit singled out,
 Such hope was mine, for holy services.
 My own voice cheered me, and, far more, the mind's 55
 Internal echo of the imperfect sound;
 To both I listened, drawing from them both
 A cheerful confidence in things to come.

Content and not unwilling now to give
 A respite to this passion, I paced on 60
 With brisk and eager steps; and came, at length,
 To a green shady place, where down I sate
 Beneath a tree, slackening my thoughts by choice,
 And settling into gentler happiness.
 'Twas autumn, and a clear and placid day, 65
 With warmth, as much as needed, from a sun
 Two hours declined towards the west; a day
 With silver clouds, and sunshine on the grass,
 And in the sheltered and the sheltering grove
 A perfect stillness. Many were the thoughts 70
 Encouraged and dismissed, till choice was made
 Of a known Vale,⁷ whither my feet should turn,
 Nor rest till they had reached the very door
 Of the one cottage which methought I saw.
 No picture of mere memory ever looked 75
 So fair; and while upon the fancied scene
 I gazed with growing love, a higher power
 Than Fancy gave assurance of some work
 Of glory there forthwith to be begun,
 Perhaps too there performed. Thus long I mused, 80
 Nor e'er lost sight of what I mused upon,
 Save when, amid the stately grove of oaks,
 Now here, now there, an acorn, from its cup
 Dislodged, through sere leaves rustled, or at once
 To the bare earth dropped with a startling sound. 85
 From that soft couch I rose not, till the sun
 Had almost touched the horizon; casting then
 A backward glance upon the curling cloud
 Of city smoke, by distance ruralised;
 Keen as a Truant or a Fugitive, 90

Even with the chance equipment of that hour
 I journeyed towards the vale which I had chosen. 100
 It was a splendid evening, and my soul
 [95] Did once again make trial of the strength
 Restored to her afresh; nor did she want
 Eolian visitations—but the harp
 Was soon defrauded,⁹ and the banded host 105
 Of harmony dispersed in straggling sounds,
 And lastly utter silence. 'Be it so,
 It is an injury', said I, 'to this day
 [100] To think of any thing but present joy.'
 So, like a peasant, I pursued my road 110
 Beneath the evening sun, nor had one wish
 Again to bend the sabbath of that time
 [105] To a servile yoke. What need of many words?—
 A pleasant loitering journey, through two days
 Continued, brought me to my hermitage.² 115

I spare to speak, my friend, of what ensued—
 The admiration and the love, the life
 In common things, the endless store of things
 [110] Rare, or at least so seeming, every day
 Found all about me in one neighbourhood, 120
 The self-congratulation,³ the complete
 Composure, and the happiness entire.
 But speedily a longing in me rose
 [115] To brace myself to some determined aim,
 Reading or thinking, either to lay up 125
 New stores, or rescue from decay the old
 By timely interference. I had hopes
 Still higher, that with a frame⁴ of outward life
 [120] I might endue, might fix in a visible home,
 Some portion of those phantoms of conceit, 130
 That had been floating loose about so long,
 And to such beings temperately deal forth
 The many feelings that oppressed my heart.⁵
 But I have been discouraged: gleams of light

9. The Aeolian harp, or wind harp—a fashionable toy in the late eighteenth century—became for the Romantics a symbol of poetic creation. It consisted of a set of strings stretched across a rectangular sounding box from which the wind evoked varying tones and harmonies.

2. Wordsworth had spent the night of November 17, 1799, at the foot of Ullswater, only twenty-one miles or so from Grasmere via the Kirkstone Pass. The change from "two days" to 1850 "three" is an emendation of 1839, or later; Wordsworth probably noticed that the

1805 reading could imply merely one full day (plus the evening of November 18, on which he set out), and wished to stress that because of the loitering he had taken two.

3. Used (as in *Old Cumberland Beggar*, 117) without the modern pejorative implication, to mean "rejoicing."

4. Anything constructed of various parts or members (Johnson's *Dictionary*).

5. Mental images ("phantoms of conceit") are to be embodied in narrative poetry, and endowed in moderation with the poet's own feelings.

But as a Pilgrim resolute, I took,
 Even with the chance equipment of that hour,
 The road that pointed toward the chosen Vale.
 It was a splendid evening, and my soul
 Once more made trial of her strength, nor lacked 95
 Æolian visitations; but the harp
 Was soon defrauded,⁹ and the banded host
 Of harmony dispersed in straggling sounds,
 And lastly utter silence! 'Be it so;
 Why think of any thing but present good?' 100
 So, like a home-bound labourer I pursued
 My way beneath the mellowing sun, that shed
 Mild influence;¹ nor left in me one wish
 Again to bend the Sabbath of that time
 To a servile yoke. What need of many words? 105
 A pleasant loitering journey, through three days
 Continued, brought me to my hermitage.²
 I spare to tell of what ensued, the life
 In common things—the endless store of things,
 Rare, or at least so seeming, every day 110
 Found all about me in one neighbourhood—
 The self-congratulation,³ and, from morn
 To night, unbroken cheerfulness serene.
 But speedily an earnest longing rose 115
 To brace myself to some determined aim,
 Reading or thinking; either to lay up
 New stores, or rescue from decay the old
 By timely interference: and therewith
 Came hopes still higher, that with outward life
 I might endue some airy phantasies 120
 That had been floating loose about for years,
 And to such beings temperately deal forth
 The many feelings that oppressed my heart.
 That hope hath been discouraged; welcome light

1. An allusion to *Paradise Lost*, VII, 375, where the Pleiades dance before the sun, "Shedding sweet influence."

- [125] Flash often from the east, then disappear, 135
 And mock me with a sky that ripens not
 Into a steady morning. If my mind,
 Remembering the sweet promise of the past,
 Would gladly grapple with some noble theme,
 [130] Vain is her wish—where'er she turns she finds. 140
 Impediments from day to day renewed.

- And now it would content me to yield up
 Those lofty hopes awhile for present gifts
 Of humbler industry. But, O dear friend,
 [135] The poet, gentle creature as he is, 145
 Hath like the lover his unruly times—
 His fits when he is neither sick nor well,
 Though no distress be near him but his own
 Unmanageable thoughts. The mind itself,
 The meditative mind, best pleased perhaps 150
 [140] While she as duteous as the mother dove
 Sits brooding,⁶ lives not always to that end,
 But hath less quiet instincts—goadings on
 That drive her as in trouble through the groves.
 With me is now such passion, which I blame 155
 [145] No otherwise than as it lasts too long.

- When, as becomes a man who would prepare
 For such a glorious work, I through myself
 Make rigorous inquisition, the report
 Is often chearing; for I neither seem 160
 [150] To lack that first great gift, the vital soul,
 Nor general truths which are themselves a sort
 Of elements and agents, under-powers,
 Subordinate helpers of the living mind.
 Nor am I naked in external things, 165
 [155] Forms, images,⁷ nor numerous other aids
 Of less regard, though won perhaps with toil,
 And needful to build up a poet's praise.
 Time, place, and manners,⁸ these I seek, and these
 I find in plenteous store, but nowhere such 170
 [160] As may be singled out with steady choice—
 No little band of yet remembered names
 Whom I, in perfect confidence, might hope
 To summon back from lonesome banishment

6. The human mind initiates the creative process by brooding, as the Holy Spirit in Milton's Christian epic had brooded over Chaos: "thou from the first / Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread / Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast abyss / And madest it pregnant . . ."

(*Paradise Lost*, I, 19–22).

7. Landscapes as they present themselves to the eye (or are retained within the mind).

8. General way of life; morals; habits (Johnson's *Dictionary*).

Dawns from the east, but dawns to disappear 125
 And mock me with a sky that ripens not
 Into a steady morning: if my mind,
 Remembering the bold promise of the past,
 Would gladly grapple with some noble theme,
 Vain is her wish; where'er she turns she finds 130
 Impediments from day to day renewed.

And now it would content me to yield up
 Those lofty hopes awhile, for present gifts
 Of humbler industry. But, oh, dear Friend!
 The Poet, gentle creature as he is, 135
 Hath, like the Lover, his unruly times;
 His fits when he is neither sick nor well,
 Though no distress be near him but his own
 Unmanageable thoughts: his mind, best pleased 140
 While she as duteous as the mother dove
 Sits brooding,⁶ lives not always to that end,
 But like the innocent bird, hath goadings on
 That drive her as in trouble through the groves;
 With me is now such passion, to be blamed
 No otherwise than as it lasts too long. 145

When, as becomes a man who would prepare
 For such an arduous work, I through myself
 Make rigorous inquisition, the report
 Is often cheering; for I neither seem 150
 To lack that first great gift, the vital soul,
 Nor general Truths, which are themselves a sort
 Of Elements and Agents, Under-powers,
 Subordinate helpers of the living mind:
 Nor am I naked of external things,
 Forms, images,⁷ nor numerous other aids 155
 Of less regard, though won perhaps with toil
 And needful to build up a Poet's praise.
 Time, place, and manners⁸ do I seek, and these
 Are found in plenteous store, but nowhere such
 As may be singled out with steady choice; 160
 No little band of yet remembered names
 Whom I, in perfect confidence, might hope
 To summon back from lonesome banishment,

	And make them inmates in the hearts of men	175
[165]	Now living, or to live in times to come. Sometimes, mistaking vainly, as I fear, Proud spring-tide swellings for a regular sea, I settle on some British theme, some old Romantic tale by Milton left unsung; ⁹	180
[170]	More often resting at some gentle place Within the groves of chivalry I pipe Among the shepherds, with reposing knights Sit by a fountain-side and hear their tales. Sometimes, more sternly moved, I would relate	185
[190]	How vanquished Mithridates northward passed And, hidden in the cloud of years, became That Odin, father of a race by whom Perished the Roman Empire; ² how the friends And followers of Sertorius, out of Spain Flying, found shelter in the Fortunate Isles, And left their usages, their arts and laws, To disappear by a slow gradual death,	190
[195]	To dwindle and to perish one by one, Starved in those narrow bounds—but not the soul Of liberty, which fifteen hundred years Survived, and, when the European came With skill and power that could not be withstood,	195
[200]	Did like a pestilence maintain its hold, And wasted down by glorious death that race Of natural heroes. ³ Or I would record How in tyrannic times, some unknown man, Unheard of in the chronicles of kings,	200
[205]	Suffered in silence for the love of truth; How that one Frenchman, through continued force	205

9. Milton's decision not to write a romance about knights in battles and tournaments is recorded in *Paradise Lost*, IX, 25–41, a passage that seems frequently to have been in Wordsworth's mind as he attempted to define his own position as a poet (see especially, 1805, III, 183*n*, below).

2. Mithridates the Great, King of Pontus, was defeated by Pompey in 66 B.C. and died two years later; Odin, in one tradition, was a barbarian who led his tribe north from the sea of Asov to Sweden in the hope that one day their descendants might carry out his revenge upon the Romans. Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of*

the Roman Empire, I (1776), p. 246, associates the two figures, and suggests that Odin's expedition would make a subject for an epic poem.

3. The Roman general Sertorius, contemporary and ally of Mithridates, gained control of most of Spain, but was unsuccessful in his attempt to master Rome from the provinces; he was assassinated in 72 B.C. According to legend, his followers emigrated to the Canary Islands after his death, and there founded a race that flourished until the arrival of the Spanish at the end of the fifteenth century.

And make them dwellers in the hearts of men
 Now living, or to live in future years. 165
 Sometimes the ambitious Power of choice, mistaking
 Proud spring-tide swellings for a regular sea,
 Will settle on some British theme, some old
 Romantic tale by Milton left unsung;⁹
 More often turning to some gentle place 170
 Within the groves of Chivalry, I pipe
 To shepherd swains, or seated harp in hand,
 Amid reposing knights by a river side
 Or fountain, listen to the grave reports
 Of dire enchantments faced and overcome 175
 By the strong mind, and tales of warlike feats,
 Where spear encountered spear, and sword with sword
 Fought, as if conscious of the blazonry
 That the shield bore, so glorious was the strife;
 Whence inspiration for a song that winds 180
 Through ever changing scenes of votive quest
 Wrongs to redress, harmonious tribute paid
 To patient courage and unblemished truth,
 To firm devotion, zeal unquenchable,
 And Christian meekness hallowing faithful loves.¹ 185
 Sometimes, more sternly moved, I would relate
 How vanquished Mithridates northward passed,
 And, hidden in the cloud of years, became
 Odin, the Father of a race by whom
 Perished the Roman Empire:² how the friends 190
 And followers of Sertorius, out of Spain
 Flying, found shelter in the Fortunate Isles,
 And left their usages, their arts and laws,
 To disappear by a slow gradual death,
 To dwindle and to perish one by one, 195
 Starved in those narrow bounds: but not the soul
 Of Liberty, which fifteen hundred years
 Survived, and, when the European came
 With skill and power that might not be withstood,
 Did, like a pestilence, maintain its hold 200
 And wasted down by glorious death that race
 Of natural heroes:³ or I would record
 How, in tyrannic times, some high-souled man,
 Unnamed among the chronicles of kings,
 Suffered in silence for Truth's sake: or tell, 205
 How that one Frenchman, through continued force

1. In this greatly extended evocation of Edmund Spenser, Wordsworth gives the poetry a moral turn of which, in de Selincourt's words, it had been "quite innocent" in the 1805 version. "Faithful

loves" in line 185 echoes the opening stanza of *The Faerie Queene*, "Fierce warres and faithful loves shall moralize my song."

- Of meditation on the inhuman deeds
 Of the first conquerors of the Indian Isles,
 Went single in his ministry across
 [210] The ocean, not to comfort the oppressed,
 But like a thirsty wind to roam about 210
 Withering the oppressor;⁴ how Gustavus found
 Help at his need in Dalecarlia's mines;⁵
 How Wallace fought for Scotland, left the name
 Of Wallace to be found like a wild flower
 All over his dear country, left the deeds 215
 [215] Of Wallace like a family of ghosts
 To people the steep rocks and river-banks,
 Her natural sanctuaries, with a local soul
 [220] Of independence and stern liberty.⁶ 220
 Sometimes it suits me better to shape out
 Some tale from my own heart, more near akin
 To my own passions and habitual thoughts,
 Some variegated story, in the main
 [225] Lofty, with interchange of gentler things. 225
 But deadening admonitions will succeed,
 And the whole beauteous fabric seems to lack
 Foundation, and withal appears throughout
 Shadowy and unsubstantial.

Then, last wish—

- My last and favorite aspiration—then
 I yearn towards some philosophic song 230
 [230] Of truth that cherishēs our daily life,
 With meditations passionate from deep
 Recesses in man's heart, immortal verse
 Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre;
 But from this awful burthen I full soon 235
 [235] Take refuge, and beguile myself with trust
 That mellow years will bring a riper mind
 And clearer insight.⁷ Thus from day to day
 I live a mockery of the brotherhood
 Of vice and virtue, with no skill to part 240
 Vague longing that is bred by want of power,
 [240] From paramount impulse not to be withstood;

4. "Dominique de Gourgès, a French gentleman who went in 1568 to Florida to avenge the massacre of the French by the Spaniards there" (*Prelude* note, 1850).

5. Gustavus Vasa of Sweden raised support among peasants in the mining district of Dalecarlia, and freed his country from Danish rule in 1521–23.

6. William Wallace, hero of Scottish nationalism, was captured and executed by Edward I in 1305. Wordsworth's interest had been stirred during his tour of Scot-

land with Dorothy in August–September 1803.

7. Another reference to *The Recluse; Home at Grasmere* (largely 1800, completed 1806), which was to be the first Book of the main philosophical section of the poem, does precisely cherish the daily life (1805, 231; 1850, 230) of the Wordsworths, holding it up as a type for general future happiness. Later tradition represented Orpheus (1805, 1850, 232–34) as a philosopher rather than a musician.

Of meditation on the inhuman deeds
 Of those who conquered first the Indian Isles,
 Went single in his ministry across
 The Ocean; not to comfort the oppressed, 210
 But, like a thirsty wind, to roam about
 Withering the Oppressor:⁴ how Gustavus sought
 Help at his need in Dalecarlia's mines;⁵
 How Wallace fought for Scotland; left the name
 Of Wallace to be found, like a wild flower, 215
 All over his dear Country; left the deeds
 Of Wallace, like a family of Ghosts,
 To people the steep rocks and river banks,
 Her natural sanctuaries, with a local soul
 Of independence and stern liberty.⁶ 220
 Sometimes it suits me better to invent
 A tale from my own heart, more near akin
 To my own passions and habitual thoughts;
 Some variegated story, in the main
 Lofty, but the unsubstantial structure melts 225
 Before the very sun that brightens it,
 Mist into air dissolving! Then a wish,
 My best and favourite aspiration, mounts
 With yearning toward some philosophic song
 Of Truth that cherishes our daily life; 230
 With meditations passionate from deep
 Recesses in man's heart, immortal verse
 Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre;
 But from this awful burthen I full soon
 Take refuge and beguile myself with trust 235
 That mellow years will bring a riper mind
 And clearer insight.⁷ Thus my days are past
 In contradiction; with no skill to part
 Vague longing, haply bred by want of power,
 From paramount impulse not to be withstood, 240

- A timorous capacity, from prudence;
 From circumspection, infinite delay.⁸
 Humility and modest awe themselves 245
 Betray me, serving often for a cloak
 [245] To a more subtle selfishness, that now
 Doth lock my functions up in blank reserve,⁹
 Now dupes me by an over-anxious eye
 That with a false activity beats off 250
 Simplicity and self-presented truth.
 [250] Ah, better far than this to stray about
 Voluptuously through fields and rural walks
 And ask no record of the hours given up
 To vacant musing, unreprieved neglect 255
 Of all things, and deliberate holiday.
 [255] Far better never to have heard the name
 Of zeal and just ambition than to live
 Thus baffled by a mind that every hour
 Turns recreant to her task, takes heart again, 260
 Then feels immediately some hollow thought
 [260] Hang like an interdict¹ upon her hopes.
 This is my lot; for either still I find
 Some imperfection in the chosen theme,
 Or see of absolute accomplishment 265
 Much wanting—so much wanting—in myself
 [265] That I recoil and droop, and seek repose
 In indolence from vain perplexity,
 Unprofitably travelling towards the grave,
 Like a false steward who hath much received 270
 And renders nothing back.²

Was it for this

- [270] That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved
 To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,
 And from his alder shades and rocky falls,
 And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice 275
 That flowed along my dreams?³ For this didst thou,
 [275] O Derwent, travelling over the green plains
 Near my 'sweet birthplace',⁵ didst thou, beauteous stream,

8. Wordsworth, in the mood he describes in *1805*, 238–44 (*1850*, 237–42), is not decisive enough to be either vicious or virtuous; he cannot distinguish between vague but feeble longings to write *The Recluse*, and an overwhelming impulse to do so, between timorousness and prudence, between mere delay and circumspection.

9. Total inaction.

1. Prohibition; pronounced "interdite."

2. See the parable of the false steward, Matthew 25:14–30.

3. This question had of course been the

opening of the two-Part *Prelude*, expressing already in October–November 1798 the poet's discontent at failure to make progress with *The Recluse*. The river is the Derwent, which flows along the far side of the garden wall of the house where Wordsworth was born at Cocker-mouth.

5. Wordsworth's quotation marks draw attention to a borrowing from Coleridge's *Frost at Midnight*, 28. There is a special appropriateness in the reference, as *The Prelude* was in all its versions the "Poem to Coleridge."

A timorous capacity from prudence,
 From circumspection, infinite delay.⁸
 Humility and modest awe themselves
 Betray me, serving often for a cloak
 To a more subtle selfishness; that now 245
 Locks every function up in blank reserve,⁹
 Now dupes me, trusting to an anxious eye
 That with intrusive restlessness beats off
 Simplicity and self-presented truth.
 Ah! better far than this, to stray about 250
 Voluptuously through fields and rural walks,
 And ask no record of the hours, resigned
 To vacant musing, unproved neglect
 Of all things; and deliberate holiday.
 Far better never to have heard the name 255
 Of zeal and just ambition, than to live
 Baffled and plagued by a mind that every hour
 Turns recreant to her task; takes heart again,
 Then feels immediately some hollow thought
 Hang like an interdict¹ upon her hopes. 260
 This is my lot; for either still I find
 Some imperfection in the chosen theme,
 Or see of absolute accomplishment
 Much wanting, so much wanting, in myself,
 That I recoil and droop, and seek repose 265
 In listlessness from vain perplexity,
 Unprofitably travelling toward the grave,
 Like a false steward who hath much received
 And renders nothing back.²

Was it for this

That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved 270
 To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,
 And, from his alder shades and rocky falls,
 And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
 That flowed along my dreams?³ For this, didst thou,
 O Derwent! winding among grassy holms⁴ 275
 Where I was looking on, a babe in arms,

4. Islands.

- Make ceaseless music through the night and day,
Which with its steady cadence tempering 280
Our human waywardness, composed my thoughts
To more than infant softness, giving me
Among the fretful dwellings of mankind,
[280] A knowledge, a dim earnest, of the calm 285
Which Nature breathes among the hills and groves?
When, having left his mountains, to the towers
Of Cockermouth that beauteous river came,
Behind my father's house he passed, close by,
[286] Along the margin of our terrace walk. 290
He was a playmate whom we dearly loved:
Oh, many a time have I, a five years' child,
A naked boy, in one delightful rill,
A little mill-race severed from his stream,
[290] Made one long bathing of a summer's day, 295
Basked in the sun, and plunged, and basked again,
Alternate, all a summer's day, or coursed
Over the sandy fields, leaping through groves
Of yellow grunsel; or, when crag and hill,
[295] The woods, and distant Skiddaw's lofty height,⁷ 300
Were bronzed with a deep radiance, stood alone
Beneath the sky, as if I had been born
On Indian plains,⁸ and from my mother's hut
Had run abroad in wantonness to sport,
[300] A naked savage, in the thunder-shower. 305
- Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up 305
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear,
Much favored in my birthplace, and no less
In that beloved vale to which erelong
[305] I was transplanted.⁹ Well I call to mind— 310
'Twas at an early age, ere I had seen
Nine summers —when upon the mountain slope
The frost and breath of frosty wind had snapped
The last autumnal crocus, 'twas my joy
To wander half the night among the cliffs
And the smooth hollows where the woodcocks ran
Along the open turf. In thought and wish 315
[310] That time, my shoulder all with springes² hung,
I was a fell destroyer. On the heights

7. Skiddaw, nine miles due east of Cockermouth, is the fourth highest peak in the Lake District (3,053 feet). "Grunsel" (1805, 298): ragwort—i.e., ragweed —(as in 1850), not the modern groundsel.

8. Wordsworth's reference is to the

American Indian.

9. The experiences that follow take place after Wordsworth has been "transplanted" to Hawkshead Grammar School, thirty-five miles from Cockermouth, in May 1779.

2. Snares.

Make ceaseless music that composed my thoughts
 To more than infant softness, giving me
 Amid the fretful dwellings of mankind
 A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm 280
 That Nature breathes among the hills and groves.
 When he had left the mountains and received
 On his smooth breast the shadow of those towers
 That yet survive, a shattered monument
 Of feudal sway,⁶ the bright blue river passed 285
 Along the margin of our terrace walk;
 A tempting playmate whom we dearly loved.
 Oh, many a time have I, a five years' child,
 In a small mill-race severed from his stream,
 Made one long bathing of a summer's day; 290
 Basked in the sun, and plunged and basked again
 Alternate, all a summer's day, or scoured
 The sandy fields, leaping through flowery groves
 Of yellow ragwort; or when rock and hill,
 The woods, and distant Skiddaw's lofty height,⁷ 295
 Were bronzed with deepest radiance, stood alone
 Beneath the sky, as if I had been born
 On Indian plains,⁸ and from my mother's hut
 Had run abroad in wantonness, to sport
 A naked savage, in the thunder shower. 300

Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
 Fostered alike by beauty and by fear:
 Much favoured in my birth-place, and no less
 In that beloved Vale to which erelong
 We were transplanted⁹—there were we let loose 305
 For sports of wider range. Ere I had told
 Ten birth-days,¹ when among the mountain slopes
 Frost, and the breath of frosty wind, had snapped
 The last autumnal crocus, 'twas my joy
 With store of springes² o'er my shoulder hung 310
 To range the open heights where woodcocks ran
 Along the smooth green turf. Through half the night,
 Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied
 That anxious visitation;—moon and stars

6. Cockermouth Castle.

1. The right number (Wordsworth was nine years old), as against that in 1805.

Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied
 My anxious visitation, hurrying on, 320
 Still hurrying, hurrying onward. Moon and stars
 [315] Were shining o'er my head; I was alone,
 And seemed to be a trouble to the peace
 That was among them. Sometimes it befel
 In these night-wanderings, that a strong desire 325
 O'erpowered my better reason, and the bird
 [320] Which was the captive of another's toils³
 Became my prey; and when the deed was done
 I heard among the solitary hills
 Low breathings coming after me, and sounds 330
 Of undistinguishable motion, steps
 [325] Almost as silent as the turf they trod.

Nor less in springtime, when on southern banks
 The shining sun had from her knot of leaves
 Decoyed the primrose flower, and when the vales 335
 And woods were warm, was I a plunderer then
 In the high places, on the lonesome peaks,
 Where'er among the mountains and the winds
 The mother-bird had built her lodge. Though mean
 My object and inglorious, yet the end⁵ 340
 [330] Was not ignoble. Oh, when I have hung
 Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass
 And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock
 But ill sustained, and almost, as it seemed,
 Suspended by the blast which blew amain, 345
 [335] Shouldering the naked crag, oh, at that time
 While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
 With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
 Blow through my ears; the sky seemed not a sky
 Of earth, and with what motion moved the clouds! 350

\The mind of man is framed even like the breath
 [341] And harmony of music) There is a dark
 Invisible workmanship that reconciles
 Discordant elements, and makes them move
 In one society. Ah me, that all 355
 [345] The terrors, all the early miseries,
 Regrets, vexations, lassitudes, that all
 The thoughts and feelings which have been infused
 Into my mind, should ever have made up
 The calm existence that is mine when I 360
 [350] Am worthy of myself. Praise to the end,

3. "Toils" can mean snares, as well as labors. Pennant's contemporary account of woodcock snaring on the fells is quoted in 1799, I, 49n, above.
 5. Result, as opposed to aim.

Were shining o'er my head. I was alone, 315
 And seemed to be a trouble to the peace
 That dwelt among them. Sometimes it befel
 In these night wanderings, that a strong desire
 O'erpowered my better reason, and the bird
 Which was the captive of another's toil³ 320
 Became my prey; and when the deed was done
 I heard among the solitary hills
 Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
 Of undistinguishable motion, steps
 Almost as silent as the turf they trod. 325

Nor less when spring had warmed the cultured Vale,⁴
 Roved we as plunderers where the mother-bird
 Had in high places built her lodge; though mean
 Our object and inglorious, yet the end⁵
 Was not ignoble. Oh! when I have hung 330
 Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass
 And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock
 But ill-sustained, and almost (so it seemed)
 Suspended by the blast that blew amain,
 Shouldering the naked crag, oh, at that time 335
 While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
 With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
 Blow through my ear! the sky seemed not a sky
 Of earth—and with what motion moved the clouds!

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows⁶ 340
 Like harmony in music; there is a dark
 Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
 Discordant elements, makes them cling together
 In one society. How strange that all
 The terrors, pains, and early miseries, 345
 Regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused
 Within my mind, should e'er have borne a part,
 And that a needful part, in making up
 The calm existence that is mine when I
 Am worthy of myself! Praise to the end! 350

4. The part of the valley that was under cultivation.

6. A pietistic line that appears first in *MS. D* (1832).

Thanks likewise for the means! But I believe
 That Nature, oftentimes, when she would frame
 A favored being, from his earliest dawn
 Of infancy doth open out the clouds 365
 As at the touch of lightning, seeking him
 With gentlest visitation; not the less,
 Though haply aiming at the self-same end,
 Does it delight her sometimes to employ
 155] Severer interventions, ministry 370
 More palpable—and so she dealt with me.

One evening—surely I was led by her⁷—
 I went alone into a shepherd's boat,
 A skiff that to a willow-tree was tied
 Within a rocky cove, its usual home. 375
 'Twas by the shores of Patterdale, a vale
 Wherein I was a stranger, thither come
 A schoolboy traveller at the holidays.
 Forth rambled from the village inn alone,
 No sooner had I sight of this small skiff, 380
 Discovered thus by unexpected chance,
 360] Than I unloosed her tether and embarked.
 The moon was up, the lake was shining clear
 Among the hoary mountains; from the shore
 I pushed, and struck the oars, and struck again 385
 In cadence, and my little boat moved on
 Even like a man who moves with stately step
 361] Though bent on speed.⁸ It was an act of stealth
 And troubled pleasure. Nor without the voice
 Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on, 390
 Leaving behind her still on either side
 365] Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
 Until they melted all into one track
 Of sparkling light.⁹ A rocky steep uprose
 Above the cavern of the willow-tree, 395
 And now, as suited one who proudly rowed
 With his best skill, I fixed a steady view
 370] Upon the top of that same craggy ridge,
 The bound of the horizon—for behind
 Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky. 400
 She was an elfin pinnace;¹ lustily
 I dipped my oars into the silent lake,

7. In 351–72 (composed January 1804) "Nature" replaces the sub-classical spirits of 1799, I, 67–81.

8. Lines 387–88 recall *Paradise Lost*, XII, 1–2: "As one who in his journey bates at noon, / Though bent on speed." The lake was Ullswater.

9. Probably, as J. C. Maxwell suggests, a recollection of the "tracks of shining white," made by the water snakes, in Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* (1798), 265–66.

1. Small boat.

Thanks to the means which Nature deigned to employ;
 Whether her fearless visitings, or those
 That came with soft alarm, like hurtless light
 Opening the peaceful clouds; or she may use
 Severer interventions, ministry 355
 More palpable, as best might suit her aim.

One summer evening (led by her)⁷ I found
 A little boat tied to a willow tree
 Within a rocky cove, its usual home.
 Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in 360
 Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth
 And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice
 Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on;
 Leaving behind her still, on either side,
 Small circles glittering idly in the moon, 365
 Until they melted all into one track
 Of sparkling light.⁹ But now, like one who rows,
 Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point
 With an unswerving line, I fixed my view
 Upon the summit of a craggy ridge, 370
 The horizon's utmost boundary; for above
 Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.
 She was an elfin pinnacle;¹ lustily
 I dipped my oars into the silent lake,

- [375] And as I rose upon the stroke my boat—
 Went heaving through the water like a swan—
 When from behind that craggy steep, till then 405
 The bound of the horizon, a huge cliff,
 As if with voluntary power instinct,
 [380] Upreared its head.² I struck, and struck again,
 And, growing still in stature, the huge cliff
 Rose up between me and the stars, and still 410
 With measured motion, like a living thing
 [385] Strode after me. With trembling hands I turned
 And through the silent water stole my way
 Back to the cavern of the willow-tree.
 There, in her mooring-place, I left my bark 415
 And through the meadows homeward went with grave
 [390] And serious thoughts; and after I had seen
 That spectacle, for many days my brain
 Worked with a dim and undetermined sense 420
 Of unknown modes of being. In my thoughts
 There was a darkness—call it solitude
 [395] Or blank desertion—no familiar shapes
 Of hourly objects, images of trees,
 Of sea or sky; no colours of green fields,³
 But huge and mighty forms that do not live
 Like living men moved slowly through my mind 425
 [400] By day, and were the trouble of my dreams.

- Wisdom and spirit of the universe,
 Thou soul that art the eternity of thought,
 That giv'st to forms and images a breath 430
 And everlasting motion—not in vain,
 [405] By day or star-light, thus from my first dawn
 Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
 The passions that build up our human soul,
 Not with the mean and vulgar⁴ works of man, 435
 But with high objects, with enduring things,
 [410] With life and Nature, purifying thus
 The elements of feeling and of thought,
 And sanctifying by such discipline
 Both pain and fear, until we recognise 440
 A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.
 [415] Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me
 With stinted kindness. In November days,
 When vapours rolling down the valleys made

2. The "huge cliff" is probably Black Crag (2,232 feet, and west of Ullswater), which would appear suddenly behind the nearer ridge, Stybarrow Crag, because the child was rowing out from the shore. "Instinct": imbued.

3. The child is deserted by *visual* reassurance, the power to conjure up pictures, "images," of familiar objects in the natural world.

4. Ordinary, commonplace.

And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat 375
 Went heaving through the water like a swan;
 When, from behind that craggy steep till then
 The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
 As if with voluntary power instinct
 Upreared its head.² I struck and struck again, 380
 And growing still in stature the grim shape
 Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
 For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
 And measured motion like a living thing,
 Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned, 385
 And through the silent water stole my way
 Back to the covert of the willow tree;
 There in her mooring-place I left my bark,—
 And through the meadows homeward went, in grave
 And serious mood; but after I had seen 390
 That spectacle, for many days, my brain
 Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
 Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts
 There hung a darkness, call it solitude
 Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes 395
 Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
 Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;³
 But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
 Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
 By day, and were a trouble to my dreams. 400

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
 Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,
 That givest to forms and images a breath
 And everlasting motion, not in vain
 By day or star-light thus from my first dawn 405
 Of childhood didst thou intwine for me
 The passions that build up our human soul;
 Not with the mean and vulgar⁴ works of man,
 But with high objects, with enduring things—
 With life and nature, purifying thus 410
 The elements of feeling and of thought,
 And sanctifying, by such discipline,
 Both pain and fear, until we recognise
 A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.
 Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me 415
 With stinted kindness. In November days,
 When vapours rolling down the valley made

- A lonely scene more lonesome, among woods 445
 At noon, and 'mid the calm of summer nights
 [420] When by the margin of the trembling lake
 Beneath the gloomy hills I homeward went
 In solitude, such intercourse was mine—
 'Twas mine among the fields both day and night, 450
 And by the waters all the summer long.
- [425] And in the frosty season, when the sun
 Was set, and visible for many a mile
 The cottage windows through the twilight blazed,
 I heeded not the summons; happy time 455
 It was indeed for all of us, to me
- [430] It was a time of rapture. Clear and loud
 The village clock tolled six; I wheeled about
 Proud and exulting, like an untired horse
 That cares not for its home. All shod with steel 460
 We hissed along the polished ice in games
- [435] Confederate, imitative of the chace
 And woodland pleasures, the resounding horn,
 The pack loud bellowing, and the hunted hare.
 So through the darkness and the cold we flew, 465
 And not a voice was idle. With the din,
- [440] Meanwhile, the precipices rang aloud;
 The leafless trees and every icy crag
 Tinkled like iron; while the distant hills
 Into the tumult sent an alien sound 470
 Of melancholy, not unnoticed; while the stars,⁵
- [445] Eastward, were sparkling clear, and in the west
 The orange sky of evening died away.

- Not seldom from the uproar I retired
 Into a silent bay, or sportively 475
 Glanced sideway, leaving the tumultuous throng,
 [450] To cut across the image of a star
 That gleamed upon the ice. And oftentimes
 When we had given our bodies to the wind,
 And all the shadowy banks on either side 480
 Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
- [455] The rapid line of motion, then at once
 Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
 Stopped short—yet still the solitary cliffs
 Wheeled by me, even as if the earth had rolled 485
 [460] With visible motion her diurnal round.⁷

5. An alexandrine, or six-foot line, which was probably not intended in the first place, but which persists through all versions of *The Prelude*.

7. Diurnal: daily. Compare *A slumber*

did my spirit seal, 7–8, written at Goslar, November–December 1798: “Rolled round in earth’s diurnal course / With rocks and stones and trees.”

A lonely scene more lonesome, among woods
 At noon, and 'mid the calm of summer nights,
 When, by the margin of the trembling lake, 420
 Beneath the gloomy hills homeward I went
 In solitude, such intercourse was mine;
 Mine was it in the fields both day and night,
 And by the waters, all the summer long.

And in the frosty season, when the sun 425
 Was set, and visible for many a mile
 The cottage windows blazed through twilight gloom,
 I heeded not their summons: happy time
 It was indeed for all of us—for me
 It was a time of rapture! Clear and loud 430
 The village clock tolled six,—I wheeled about,
 Proud and exulting like an untired horse
 That cares not for his home. All shod with steel,
 We hissed along the polished ice in games
 Confederate, imitative of the chase 435
 And woodland pleasures,—the resounding horn,
 The pack loud chiming, and the hunted hare.
 So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
 And not a voice was idle; with the din
 Smitten, the precipices rang aloud; 440
 The leafless trees and every icy crag
 Tinkled like iron; while far distant hills
 Into the tumult sent an alien sound
 Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars⁵
 Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west 445
 The orange sky of evening died away.
 Not seldom from the uproar I retired
 Into a silent bay, or sportively
 Glanced sideways, leaving the tumultuous throng,
 To cut across the reflex⁶ of a star 450
 That fled, and, flying still before me, gleamed
 Upon the glassy plain; and oftentimes,
 When we had given our bodies to the wind,
 And all the shadowy banks on either side
 Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still 455
 The rapid line of motion, then at once
 Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
 Stopped short; yet still the solitary cliffs
 Wheeled by me—even as if the earth had rolled
 With visible motion her diurnal round!⁷ 460

6. "Shadow" (1799), "image" (1805), "reflex" (1850), all mean "reflection," but Wordsworth's final choice has an indefinable rightness.

Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,⁸
 Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
 Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

- Ye presences of Nature, in the sky 490
 [465] Or on the earth, ye visions of the hills
 And souls of lonely places, can I think
 A vulgar hope was yours when ye employed
 Such ministry—when ye through many a year
 Haunting me thus among my boyish sports, 495
 [470] On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills,
 Impressed upon all forms the characters⁹
 Of danger or desire, and thus did make
 The surface of the universal earth
 With triumph, and delight, and hope, and fear,¹ 500
 [475] Work like a sea?

- Not uselessly employed,
 I might pursue this theme through every change
 Of exercise and play to which the year
 Did summon us in its delightful round.
 We were a noisy crew; the sun in heaven 505
 [480] Beheld not vales more beautiful than ours,
 Nor saw a race in happiness and joy
 More worthy of the fields where they were sown.
 I would record with no reluctant voice
 The woods of autumn, and their hazel bowers 510
 [485] With milk-white clusters hung,² the rod and line—
 True symbol of the foolishness of hope—
 Which with its strong enchantment led us on
 By rocks and pools, shut out from every star
 All the green summer, to forlorn cascades 515
 [490] Among the windings of the mountain brooks.
 Unfading recollections—at this hour
 The heart is almost mine with which I felt
 From some hill-top on sunny afternoons
 The kite, high up among the fleecy clouds, 520
 [495] Pull at its rein like an impatient courser,

8. Sequence, succession.

9. Marks, signs; as at VI, 570, below.
 "Impressed": stamped, imprinted.

1. As W.J.B. Owen points out ("Annotating Wordsworth," p. 65) Wordsworth thinks, "whether instinctively or from literary training," in terms of the eighteenth-century distinction between the beautiful (the small and orderly) and the sublime (the vast and terrifying). Compare lines 305–6, above: "Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up /

Fostered alike by beauty and by fear
 * * *

"Work" (line 501): seethe, move restlessly.

2. 1805, 509–11 (1850, 484–85) are seemingly a reference to *Nutting* (October–December 1798), which Wordsworth later claimed had been written for *The Prelude*, though there is no manuscript evidence to suggest that it was at any time incorporated in 1799.

Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,⁸
 Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
 Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

Ye Presences of Nature in the sky
 And on the earth! Ye Visions of the hills! 465
 And Souls of lonely places! can I think
 A vulgar hope was yours when ye employed
 Such ministry, when ye through many a year
 Haunting me thus among my boyish sports,
 On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills, 470
 Impressed upon all forms the characters⁹
 Of danger or desire; and thus did make
 The surface of the universal earth
 With triumph and delight, with hope and fear,
 Work like a sea?¹ 475

Not uselessly employed,
 Might I pursue this theme through every change
 Of exercise and play, to which the year
 Did summon us in his delightful round.

We were a noisy crew; the sun in heaven
 Beheld not vales more beautiful than ours; 480
 Nor saw a band in happiness and joy
 Richer, or worthier of the ground they trod.
 I could record with no reluctant voice
 The woods of autumn, and their hazel bowers
 With milk-white clusters hung;² the rod and line, 485
 True symbol of hope's foolishness, whose strong
 And unreproved enchantment led us on
 By rocks and pools shut out from every star,
 All the green summer, to forlorn cascades
 Among the windings hid of mountain brooks 490
 —Unfading recollections! at this hour
 The heart is almost mine with which I felt,
 From some hill-top on sunny afternoons,
 The paper kite high among fleecy clouds
 Pull at her rein like an impetuous courser; 495

Or, from the meadows sent on gusty days,
Beheld her breast the wind, then suddenly
Dashed headlong and rejected by the storm.³

- Ye lowly cottages in which we dwelt, 525
- [500] A ministration of your own was yours,
A sanctity, a safeguard, and a love.
Can I forget you, being as ye were
So beautiful among the pleasant fields
In which ye stood? Or can I here forget 530
The plain and seemly countenance with which
- [505] Ye dealt out your plain comforts? Yet had ye
Delights and exultations of your own:
Eager and never weary we pursued 535
Our home amusements by the warm peat fire
At evening, when with pencil and with slate,
- [510] In square divisions parcelled out, and all
With crosses and with cyphers scribbled o'er,⁴
We schemed and puzzled, head opposed to head,
In strife too humble to be named in verse; 540
Or round the naked table, snow-white deal,
- [515] Cherry, or maple, sate in close array,
And to the combat—lu or whist—led on
A thick-ribbed army, not as in the world
Neglected and ungratefully thrown by 545
Even for the very service they had wrought,
- [520] But husbanded through many a long campaign.⁵
Uncouth assemblage was it, where no few
Had changed their functions—some, plebeian cards
Which fate beyond the promise of their birth 550
Had glorified, and called to represent
- [525] The persons of departed potentates.
Oh, with what echoes on the board they fell!
Ironic diamonds—clubs, hearts, diamonds, spades,
A congregation piteously akin. 555
Cheap matter did they give to boyish wit,
- [530] Those sooty knaves, precipitated down
With scoffs and taunts like Vulcan out of heaven;
The paramount ace, a moon in her eclipse;
Queens, gleaming through their splendour's last decay; 560
And monarchs, surly at the wrongs sustained

3. 1805, 510–24 follow 535–70 in 1799.

4. Tick-tack-toe (noughts and crosses), described by a mock-heroic rendering of Milton's line, "With centric and eccentric scribbled o'er" (*Paradise Lost*, VIII, 83).

5. "Lu" is the card-game loo; "thick-ribbed" at line 544 refers probably to

the thickening of the cards' edges through use. In lines 544–47 Wordsworth has in mind his own account of a 'Discharged Soldier, which was written January-February 1798, and finally became 1805, IV, 363–504.

Or, from the meadows sent on gusty days,
Beheld her breast the wind, then suddenly
Dashed headlong, and rejected by the storm.³

Ye lowly cottages wherein we dwelt,
A ministration of your own was yours; 500
Can I forget you, being as you were
So beautiful among the pleasant fields
In which ye stood? or can I here forget
The plain and seemly countenance with which
Ye dealt out your plain comforts? Yet had ye 505
Delights and exultations of your own.
Eager and never weary we pursued
Our home-amusements by the warm peat-fire
At evening, when with pencil, and smooth slate
In square divisions parcelled out and all 510
With crosses and with cyphers scribbled o'er,⁴
We schemed and puzzled, head opposed to head
In strife too humble to be named in verse:
Or round the naked table, snow-white deal,
Cherry or maple, sate in close array, 515
And to the combat, Loo or Whist, led on
A thick-ribbed army; not, as in the world,
Neglected and ungratefully thrown by
Even for the very service they had wrought,
But husbanded through many a long campaign.⁵ 520
Uncouth assemblage was it, where no few
Had changed their functions; some, plebeian cards
Which Fate, beyond the promise of their birth,
Had dignified, and called to represent
The persons of departed potentates. 525
Oh, with what echoes on the board they fell!
Ironic diamonds,—clubs, hearts, diamonds, spades,
A congregation piteously akin!
Cheap matter offered they to boyish wit,
Those sooty knaves, precipitated down 530
With scoffs and taunts, like Vulcan out of heaven:
The paramount ace, a moon in her eclipse,
Queens gleaming through their splendour's last decay,
And monarchs surly at the wrongs sustained

- [535] By royal visages.⁶ Meanwhile abroad
 The heavy rain was falling, or the frost
 Raged bitterly with keen and silent tooth;
 And, interrupting the impassioned game, 565
 From Esthwaite's neighbouring lake the splitting ice,
 While it sank down towards the water, sent
 [541] Among the meadows and the hills its long
 And dismal yellings, like the noise of wolves
 When they are howling round the Bothnic main.⁷ 570

Nor, sedulous as I have been to trace⁸

- [545] How Nature by extrinsic passion first
 Peopled my mind with beauteous forms or grand
 And made me love them,⁹ may I well forget
 How other pleasures have been mine, and joys 575
 Of subtler origin—how I have felt,
 [550] Not seldom, even in that tempestuous time,
 Those hallowed and pure motions of the sense¹
 Which seem in their simplicity to own
 An intellectual charm,² that calm delight 580
 Which, if I err not, surely must belong
 [555] To those first-born affinities³ that fit
 Our new existence to existing things,
 And, in our dawn of being, constitute
 The bond of union betwixt life and joy.⁴ 585

Yes, I remember when the changeful earth

- [560] And twice five seasons on my mind had stamped
 The faces of the moving year, even then,
 A child, I held unconscious intercourse

6. In Wordsworth's extension here of the description of the card game in 1799, the influence of Cowper is less apparent, and that of Pope becomes more obvious. See 1799, I, 225*n*, above; and with 1805, 549–51 (1850, 522–29), compare Pope's *Rape of the Lock* (1717), III, 54, "Gain'd but one Trump and one *Plebeian* Card."

7. The northern Baltic. In 1799, lines 510–24 appear at this point, followed by versions of the Drowned Man (1805, V, 450–73) and of the "spots of time" sequence (XI, 257–388). At an intervening stage in early March 1804, the Drowned Man had been part of Book IV, and the "spots of time" the climax of Book V, of the short-lived five-Book *Prelude*; see *Composition and Texts: 1805/1850*, Introduction, below.

8. This uneasy transition is an afterthought drawn from *Paradise Lost*, IX, 27: "Not sedulous by nature to indite." "Sedulous": diligent, active.

9. Wordsworth's stress is on the child's unconsciousness of Nature's working: her forms "people" his memory not because he wishes them to do so, but as a result of emotions that are "extrinsic"—not directly relevant—experienced during his "boyish sports."

1. Maxwell points out that Wordsworth is "recalling, and reversing" Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, I, iv, 59, "The wanton stings and motions of the sense."

2. In *The Prelude*, "intellectual" is consistently synonymous with "spiritual."

3. Affinities with which the child is born; compare "those first affections," *Intimations Ode*, 151.

4. 1805, 576–85 (1850, 549–58) affirm Wordsworth's view that in the spontaneous sensuousness of childhood there is a quality of mind (akin to Blake's *Innocence*) vital to the development of ontological security.

By royal visages.⁶ Meanwhile abroad 535
 Incessant rain was falling, or the frost
 Raged bitterly, with keen and silent tooth;
 And, interrupting oft that eager game,
 From under Esthwaite's splitting fields of ice
 The pent-up air, struggling to free itself, 540
 Gave out to meadow grounds and hills a loud
 Protracted yelling, like the noise of wolves
 Howling in troops along the Bothnic Main.⁷

Nor, sedulous as I have been to trace⁸
 How Nature by extrinsic passion first 545
 Peopled the mind with forms sublime or fair,
 And made me love them,⁹ may I here omit
 How other pleasures have been mine, and joys
 Of subtler origin; how I have felt,
 Not seldom even in that tempestuous time, 550
 Those hallowed and pure motions of the sense¹
 Which seem, in their simplicity, to own
 An intellectual charm;² that calm delight
 Which, if I err not, surely must belong
 To those first-born affinities³ that fit 555
 Our new existence to existing things,
 And, in our dawn of being, constitute
 The bond of union between life and joy.⁴

Yes, I remember when the changeful earth,
 And twice five summers on my mind had stamped 560
 The faces of the moving year, even then
 I held unconscious intercourse with beauty

- With the eternal beauty, drinking in 590
 A pure organic⁶ pleasure from the lines
 [565] Of curling mist, or from the level plain
 Of waters coloured by the steady clouds.
 The sands of Westmoreland, the creeks and bays
 Of Cumbria's⁷ rocky limits, they can tell 595
 How when the sea threw off his evening shade
 [570] And to the shepherd's huts beneath the crags
 Did send sweet notice of the rising moon,
 How I have stood, to fancies such as these,
 Engrafted in the tenderness of thought, 600
 A stranger, linking with the spectacle
 No conscious memory of a kindred sight,
 [575] And bringing with me no peculiar sense
 Of quietness or peace⁸—yet I have stood
 Even while mine eye has moved o'er three long leagues 605
 Of shining water, gathering, as it seemed,
 Through every hair-breadth of that field of light
 [580] New pleasure, like a bee among the flowers.
- Thus often in those fits of vulgar joy⁹
 Which through all seasons on a child's pursuits 610
 Are prompt attendants, 'mid that giddy bliss
 Which like a tempest works along the blood
 [585] And is forgotten, even then I felt
 Gleams like the flashing of a shield. The earth
 And common face of Nature spake to me 615
 Rememberable things; sometimes, 'tis true,
 By chance collisions and quaint accidents—
 [590] Like those ill-sorted unions, work supposed
 Of evil-minded fairies¹—yet not vain 620
 Nor profitless, if haply they impressed
 Collateral² objects and appearances,
 Albeit lifeless then, and doomed to sleep.
 [595] Until maturer seasons called them forth
 To impregnate and to elevate the mind. 625
 And if the vulgar joy by its own weight
 Wearing itself out of the memory,

6. Sensual, bodily.

7. Cumberland's.

8. Wordsworth is looking back to a period at which the beautiful scenes of Nature could be admired in and for themselves, neither conjuring up other scenes within the mind, nor setting up a response determined by previous experience. For the contemporary reader there would be a tacit reference—explicit in 1799, I, 406—to the theory of the mind's "association of ideas" derived from sense-

experience, as formulated by David Hartley (1705–57), who dominated Coleridge's thinking in the mid-1790s, and was to a lesser extent an influence on Wordsworth himself.

9. Ordinary pleasures, as opposed to the heightened joy of communion.

1. Fairies were supposed to cause ill-assorted couples to fall in love, as in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

2. Indirect.

Old as creation,⁵ drinking in a pure
 Organic⁶ pleasure from the silver wreaths
 Of curling mist, or from the level plain
 Of waters coloured by impending clouds. 565

The sands of Westmoreland, the creeks and bays
 Of Cumbria's⁷ rocky limits, they can tell
 How, when the Sea threw off his evening shade,
 And to the shepherd's hut on distant hills 570
 Sent welcome notice of the rising moon,
 How I have stood, to fancies such as these
 A stranger, linking with the spectacle
 No conscious memory of a kindred sight,
 And bringing with me no peculiar sense 575
 Of quietness or peace;⁸ yet have I stood,
 Even while mine eye hath moved o'er many a league
 Of shining water, gathering as it seemed
 Through every hair-breadth in that field of light
 New pleasure like a bee among the flowers. 580

Thus oft amid those fits of vulgar joy⁹
 Which, through all seasons, on a child's pursuits
 Are prompt attendants, 'mid that giddy bliss
 Which, like a tempest, works along the blood
 And is forgotten; even then I felt 585
 Gleams like the flashing of a shield;—the earth
 And common face of Nature spake to me
 Rememberable things; sometimes, 'tis true,
 By chance collisions and quaint accidents
 (Like those ill-sorted unions, work supposed 590
 Of evil-minded fairies),¹ yet not vain
 Nor profitless, if haply they impressed
 Collateral² objects and appearances,
 Albeit lifeless then, and doomed to sleep
 Until maturer seasons called them forth 595
 To impregnate and to elevate the mind.
 —And if the vulgar joy by its own weight
 Wearied itself out of the memory,

5. Wordsworth's original phrase, "the eternal beauty" (1799 and 1805), has been modified to remove the possibility of transcendental interpretation; see 1799, I, 397n, above.

The scenes which were a witness of that joy
 [600] Remained, in their substantial lineaments —
 Depicted on the brain, and to the eye
 Were visible, a daily sight. And thus 630
 By the impressive discipline of fear,
 By pleasure and repeated happiness—
 [605] So frequently repeated—and by force
 Of obscure feelings representative
 Of joys that were forgotten, these same scenes, 635
 So beauteous and majestic in themselves,
 Though yet the day was distant, did at length
 [610] Become habitually dear, and all
 Their hues and forms were by invisible links
 Allied to the affections.³ 640

I began

My story early, feeling, as I fear,
 The weakness of a human love for days
 [615] Disowned by memory—ere the birth of spring
 Planting my snowdrops among winter snows.⁴ 645
 Nor will it seem to thee, my friend, so prompt
 In sympathy, that I have lengthened out
 [620] With fond and feeble tongue a tedious tale.⁶
 Meanwhile my hope has been that I might fetch
 Invigorating thoughts from former years,
 Might fix the wavering balance of my mind, 650
 And haply meet reproaches too, whose power
 [625] May spur me on, in manhood now mature,
 To honorable toil.⁷ Yet should these hopes
 Be vain, and thus should neither I be taught
 To understand myself, nor thou to know 655
 With better knowledge how the heart was framed
 [630] Of him thou lovest, need I dread from thee
 Harsh judgments if I am so loth to quit
 Those recollected hours that have the charm
 Of visionary things,⁸ and lovely forms 660
 And sweet sensations, that throw back our life

3. Feelings. As Havens points out, 1805, 609–40 (1850, 581–612) are to some extent contradictory. Wordsworth seems uncertain how far the “Rememberable things” spoken by Nature were consciously experienced at the time. “Gleams like the flashing of a shield” are positively “felt” in 1805, 613–14 (1850, 585–86) but natural “objects and appearances” in 1805, 621–23 (1850, 593–95) are “lifeless,” and “doomed to sleep / Until maturer seasons [call] them forth.”
 4. Attributing snowdrops—a full flower-

ing of memory—to a period when there would have been only snow.

6. The banal alliteration is a joke for Coleridge (the “friend” of line 645) about poetic craftsmanship.

7. Especially the writing of the main section of *The Recluse*, a concern as vital to Wordsworth in 1804 as it had been when these lines were written for 1799; see 1805, 674*n*, below.

8. Things seen in the imagination, with the inward eye.

The scenes which were a witness of that joy
 Remained in their substantial lineaments 600
 Depicted on the brain, and to the eye
 Were visible, a daily sight; and thus
 By the impressive discipline of fear,
 By pleasure and repeated happiness,
 So frequently repeated, and by force 605
 Of obscure feelings representative
 Of things forgotten, these same scenes so bright,
 So beautiful, so majestic in themselves,
 Though yet the day was distant, did become
 Habitually dear, and all their forms 610
 And changeful colours by invisible links
 Were fastened to the affections.³

I began

My story early—not misled, I trust,
 By an infirmity of love for days
 Disowned by memory—fancying flowers where none, 615
 Not even the sweetest, do or can survive,
 For him at least whose dawning day they cheered.⁵
 Nor will it seem to thee, O Friend! so prompt
 In sympathy, that I have lengthened out
 With fond and feeble tongue a tedious tale.⁶ 620
 Meanwhile, my hope has been, that I might fetch
 Invigorating thoughts from former years;
 Might fix the wavering balance of my mind,
 And haply meet reproaches too, whose power
 May spur me on, in manhood now mature, 625
 To honourable toil.⁷ Yet should these hopes
 Prove vain, and thus should neither I be taught
 To understand myself, nor thou to know
 With better knowledge how the heart was framed
 Of him thou lovest; need I dread from thee 630
 Harsh judgements, if the song be loth to quit
 Those recollected hours that have the charm
 Of visionary things,⁸ those lovely forms,
 And sweet sensations that throw back our life,

5. Lines 615–17 are a late correction by Wordsworth which his executors chose to ignore. The first edition, without author-

ity from the poet, reads as *1805*, 640–44, but with “breath” for “birth” in line 643.

- [635] And almost make our infancy itself
A visible scene on which the sun is shining?

One end hereby at least hath been attained—
My mind hath been revived—and if this mood
Desert me not, I will forthwith bring down

665

- [640] Through later years the story of my life.
The road lies plain before me, 'Tis a theme
Single and of determined bounds, and hence
I chuse it rather at this time than work

670

- [645] Of ampler or more varied argument,
Where I might be discomfited and lost,
And certain hopes are with me that to thee
This labour will be welcome, honoured friend.⁹

9. Wordsworth's concluding verse-paragraph was written in January 1804, and states plainly to Coleridge why it is that he chooses to shelve the philosophical

section of *The Recluse* in order to write an extended autobiography (at that time, of course, the five-Book *Prelude*).

And almost make remotest infancy
A visible scene, on which the sun is shining? 635

One end at least hath been attained; my mind
Hath been revived, and if this genial mood
Desert me not, forthwith shall be brought down
Through later years the story of my life. 640
The road lies plain before me;—'tis a theme
Single and of determined bounds; and hence
I choose it rather at this time, than work
Of ampler or more varied argument,
Where I might be discomfited and lost: 645
And certain hopes are with me, that to thee
This labour will be welcome, honoured Friend!⁹

Book Second

School-time (Continued)

- Thus far, O friend, have we, though leaving much
Unvisited, endeavoured to retrace
My life through its first years, and measured back
The way I travelled when I first began
- [15] To love the woods and fields. The passion yet 5
Was in its birth, sustained, as might befall,
By nourishment that came unsought—for still
From week to week, from month to month, we lived
A round of tumult. Duly¹ were our games
- [10] Prolonged in summer till the daylight failed: 10
No chair remained before the doors, the bench
And threshold steps were empty, fast asleep
The labourer and the old man who had sate
A later lingerer, yet the revelry
- [15] Continued and the loud uproar. At last, 15
When all the ground was dark and the huge clouds
Were edged with twinkling stars, to bed we went
With weary joints and with a beating mind.
Ah, is there one who ever has been young
- [20] And needs a monitory voice to tame 20
The pride of virtue and of intellect?²
And is there one, the wisest and the best
Of all mankind, who does not sometimes wish
For things which cannot be, who would not give,
- [25] If so he might, to duty and to truth 25
The eagerness of infantine desire?
A tranquillizing spirit presses now
On my corporeal frame,³ so wide appears
The vacancy between me and those days,
- [30] Which yet have such self-presence⁴ in my mind 30
That sometimes when I think of them I seem
Two consciousnesses—conscious of myself,
And of some other being. A grey stone
Of native rock, left midway in the square
- [35] Of our small market-village, was the home 35
And centre of these joys; and when, returned
After long absence, thither I repaired,
I found that it was split and gone to build

1. Appropriately.

2. Wordsworth's syntax is cryptic, but his meaning is clear: "Can anyone who remembers the vitality of youth need to be warned not to overrate the qualities of age?"

3. A recollection of *Tintern Abbey*, 44-46: "the breath of this corporeal frame /

And even the motion of our human blood / Almost suspended * * * " In each case the corporeality of the body is stressed to show the dominance of mind.

4. Actuality; compare, among many other Wordsworth compounds, "self-transmuted," "under-presence" (*1805*, IV, 141; XIII, 71, below).

Book Second

School-time (Continued)

THUS far, O Friend! have we, though leaving much
Unvisited, endeavoured to retrace
The simple ways in which my childhood walked;
Those chiefly that first led me to the love
Of rivers, woods, and fields. The passion yet 5
Was in its birth, sustained as might befall
By nourishment that came unsought; for still
From week to week, from month to month, we lived
A round of tumult. Duly¹ were our games
Prolonged in summer till the day-light failed: 10
No chair remained before the doors; the bench
And threshold steps were empty; fast asleep
The labourer, and the old man who had sate
A later lingerer; yet the revelry
Continued and the loud uproar: at last, 15
When all the ground was dark, and twinkling stars
Edged the black clouds, home and to bed we went,
Feverish with weary joints and beating minds.
Ah! is there one who ever has been young,
Nor needs a warning voice to tame the pride 20
Of intellect and virtue's self-esteem?²
One is there, though the wisest and the best
Of all mankind, who covets not at times
Union that cannot be;—who would not give,
If so he might, to duty and to truth 25
The eagerness of infantine desire?
A tranquillising spirit presses now
On my corporeal frame,³ so wide appears
The vacancy between me and those days
Which yet have such self-presence⁴ in my mind, 30
That musing on them, often do I seem
Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself
And of some other Being. A rude mass
Of native rock, left midway in the square
Of our small market village, was the goal 35
Or centre of these sports; and when, returned
After long absence, thither I repaired,
Gone was the old grey stone, and in its place

- A smart assembly-room that perked and flared
 With wash and rough-cast, elbowing the ground 40
 [40] Which had been ours.⁵ But let the fiddle scream,
 And be ye happy! Yet, my friends, I know
 That more than one of you will think with me
 Of those soft starry nights, and that old dame
 From whom the stone was named, who there had sate 45
 [45] And watched her table with its huxter's wares,
 Assiduous through the length of sixty years.⁶
- We ran a boisterous race, the year span round
 With giddy motion; but the time approached
 That brought with it a regular desire 50
 [50] For calmer pleasures—when the beauteous forms
 Of Nature were collaterally attached
 To every scheme of holiday delight,
 And every boyish sport, less grateful else
 And languidly pursued.⁷ When summer came 55
 [55] It was the pastime of our afternoons
 To beat along the plain of Windermere
 With rival oars; and the selected bourne⁸
 Was now an island musical with birds
 That sang for ever, now a sister isle 60
 [60] Beneath the oak's umbrageous⁹ covert, sown
 With lilies-of-the-valley like a field,
 And now a third small island where remained
 An old stone table and a mouldered cave—
 [65] A hermit's history.¹ In such a race, 65
 So ended, disappointment could be none,
 Uneasiness, or pain, or jealousy;
 We rested in the shade, all pleased alike,
 Conquered and conqueror. Thus the pride of strength
 [70] And the vainglory of superior skill 70
 Were interfused with objects which subdued
 And tempered them, and gradually produced
 A quiet independence of the heart.
 And to my friend who knows me I may add,
 Unapprehensive of reproof, that hence 75
 [75] Ensued a diffidence and modesty,

5. The resented "assembly-room" is the Hawkshead Town Hall, built in 1790. "Wash" in 1805 is whitewash, "rough-cast" a facing of mortar and gravel.

6. Wordsworth and his brother John returned to Hawkshead, the scene of their schooldays, with Coleridge on November 2, 1799.

7. Nature is still not sought for herself, but her "collateral" pleasures are now valued, where at the stage represented by

1805, I, 622–23 they had been not merely incidental, but "lifeless * * * / Until maturer seasons called them forth." "Grateful": pleasing.

8. Goal, destination.

9. Shady.

1. The 1850 reference to "Our Lady" identifies the island as Lady Holm, traditionally the site of a chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

A smart Assembly-room usurped the ground
 That had been ours.⁵ There let the fiddle scream, 40
 And be ye happy! Yet, my Friends! I know
 That more than one of you will think with me
 Of those soft starry nights, and that old Dame
 From whom the stone was named, who there had sate,
 And watched her table with its huckster's wares 45
 Assiduous, through the length of sixty years.⁶

We ran a boisterous course; the year span round
 With giddy motion. But the time approached
 That brought with it a regular desire
 For calmer pleasures, when the winning forms 50
 Of Nature were collaterally attached
 To every scheme of holiday delight
 And every boyish sport, less grateful else
 And languidly pursued.⁷

When summer came,
 Our pastime was, on bright half-holidays, 55
 To sweep along the plain of Windermere
 With rival oars; and the selected bourne⁸
 Was now an Island musical with birds
 That sang and ceased not; now a Sister Isle
 Beneath the oak's umbrageous⁹ covert, sown 60
 With lilies of the valley like a field;
 And now a third small Island, where survived
 In solitude the ruins of a shrine
 Once to Our Lady dedicate, and served
 Daily with chaunted rites.¹ In such a race 65
 So ended, disappointment could be none,
 Uneasiness, or pain, or jealousy:
 We rested in the shade, all pleased alike,
 Conquered and conqueror. Thus the pride of strength,
 And the vain-glory of superior skill, 70
 Were tempered; thus was gradually produced
 A quiet independence of the heart;
 And to my Friend who knows me I may add,
 Fearless of blame, that hence for future days
 Ensued a diffidence and modesty, 75

And I was taught to feel—perhaps too much—
The self-sufficing power of solitude.

- No delicate viands sapped our bodily strength:
More than we wished we knew the blessing then 80
- [80] Of vigorous hunger, for our daily meals
Were frugal, Sabine fare—and then, exclude
A little weekly stipend,² and we lived
Through three divisions of the quartered year
In penniless poverty. But now, to school 85
- [85] Returned from the half-yearly holidays,
We came with purses more profusely filled,³
Allowance which abundantly sufficed
To gratify the palate with repasts
More costly than the dame of whom I spake, 90
That ancient woman, and her board, supplied.
Hence inroads into distant vales, and long
Excursions far away among the hills,
Hence rustic dinners on the cool green ground—
- [90] Or in the woods, or near a river-side, 95
Or by some shady fountain⁴—while soft airs
Among the leaves were stirring, and the sun,
Unfelt, shone sweetly round us in our joy.

- Nor is my aim neglected if I tell
- [95] How twice in the long length of those half-years 100
We from our funds perhaps with bolder hand
Drew largely, anxious for one day at least
To feel the motion of the galloping steed.
And with the good old innkeeper, in truth,
On such occasion sometimes we employed 105
- [100] Sly subterfuge, for the intended bound
Of the day's journey was too distant far
For any cautious man: a structure famed
Beyond its neighbourhood, the antique walls
Of that large abbey which within the Vale 110
Of Nightshade, to St Mary's honour built,
[105] Stands yet,⁶ a mouldering pile with fractured arch,
Belfry, and images, and living trees—
A holy scene. Along the smooth green turf
Our horses grazed. To more than inland peace 115
Left by the sea-wind passing overhead
- [110] (Though wind of roughest temper) trees and towers

2. In 1787, his last year at school, Wordsworth had sixpence a week pocket money, and his youngest brother Christopher, threepence. "Sabine fare" (1805, 82): a reference to the frugality of the Roman poet Horace on his Sabine farm.

3. In January 1787 Wordsworth returned to school with a guinea, Christopher with 10s. 6d.

4. Spring or stream.

6. Furness Abbey, roughly twenty miles south of Hawkshead.

And I was taught to feel, perhaps too much,
The self-sufficing power of Solitude.

Our daily meals were frugal, Sabine fare!
More than we wished we knew the blessing then
Of vigorous hunger—hence corporeal strength 80
Unsapped by delicate viands; for, exclude
A little weekly stipend,² and we lived
Through three divisions of the quartered year
In penniless poverty. But now to school
From the half-yearly holidays returned, 85
We came with weightier purses,³ that sufficed
To furnish treats more costly than the Dame
Of the old grey stone, from her scant board, supplied.
Hence rustic dinners on the cool green ground,
Or in the woods, or by a river side 90
Or shady fountains,⁴ while among the leaves
Soft airs were stirring, and the mid-day sun
Unfelt shone brightly round us in our joy.
Nor is my aim neglected if I tell
How sometimes, in the length of those half-years, 95
We from our funds drew largely;—proud to curb,
And eager to spur on, the galloping steed;
And with the cautious inn-keeper, whose stud
Supplied our want, we haply might employ
Sly subterfuges, if the adventure's bound 100
Were distant: some framed temple where of yore
The Druids worshipped,⁵ or the antique walls
Of that large abbey, where within the Vale
Of Nightshade, to St. Mary's honour built,
Stands yet⁶ a mouldering pile with fractured arch, 105
Belfry, and images, and living trees,
A holy scene! Along the smooth green turf
Our horses grazed. To more than inland peace
Left by the west wind sweeping overhead
From a tumultuous ocean, trees and towers 110

5. Wordsworth has in mind the stone circle at Swinside, west of Duddon Bridge, to which in 1793 he had drawn attention in a note to *Evening Walk*, 171.

The mistaken association of stone circles with the druids was widespread at the time.

May in that valley oftentimes be seen
 Both silent and both motionless alike,
 Such is the shelter that is there, and such 120
 The safeguard for repose and quietness.

- [115] Our steeds remounted, and the summons given,
 With whip and spur we by the chauntry⁷ flew
 In uncouth race, and left the cross-legged knight,
 And the stone abbot,⁸ and that single wren 125
 Which one day sang so sweetly in the nave
 [120] Of the old church that, though from recent showers
 The earth was comfortless, and, touched by faint
 Internal breezes—sobblings of the place
 And respirations—from the roofless walls 130
 The shuddering ivy dripped large drops, yet still
 [125] So sweetly 'mid the gloom the invisible bird
 Sang to itself that there I could have made
 My dwelling-place, and lived for ever there
 To hear such music. Through the walls we flew 135
 And down the valley, and, a circuit made
 [130] In wantonness of heart, through rough and smooth
 We scampered homeward. Oh, ye rocks and streams,
 And that still spirit of the evening air,
 Even in this joyous time I sometimes felt 140
 Your presence, when, with slackened step, we breathed⁹
 [135] Along the sides of the steep hills, or when,
 Lighted by gleams of moonlight from the sea,
 We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand.¹

- Upon the eastern shore of Windermere 145
 Above the crescent of a pleasant bay
 [140] There was an inn, no homely-featured shed,
 Brother of the surrounding cottages,
 But 'twas a splendid place, the door beset
 With chaises, grooms, and liveries, and within 150
 Decanters, glasses, and the blood-red wine.
 [145] In ancient times, or ere the hall was built
 On the large island, had this dwelling been
 More worthy of a poet's love, a hut
 Proud of its one bright fire and sycamore shade;² 155

7. A chapel endowed for the singing of masses for the dead.

8. The cross-legged knight has been moved, but may still be seen at Furness; it is less easy to identify the stone abbot.

9. Let our horses get their breath back.

1. Their direct route to Hawkshead would have been along the Dalton road to Ulverston, but the "circuit" referred to at 1805, 136 (1850, 129) took them twelve miles along Levens Sands from Ramp-

side, opposite Piel Castle, to Greenodd. Compare 1805, 559-66, below, where the lines are recollected. 1799, II, 140-78 are omitted at this point; the sequence is re-introduced in part at 1850, VIII, 458-75.

2. The hall of Belle Isle on Windermere was completed in the early 1780s, and had the effect of bringing custom to the neighborhood. The inn was the old White Lion at Bowness.

In that sequestered valley may be seen,
 Both silent and both motionless alike;
 Such the deep shelter that is there, and such
 The safeguard for repose and quietness.

Our steeds remounted and the summons given, 115
 With whip and spur we through the chauntry⁷ flew
 In uncouth race, and left the cross-legged knight,
 And the stone-abbot,⁸ and that single wren
 Which one day sang so sweetly in the nave
 Of the old church, that—though from recent showers 120
 The earth was comfortless, and touched by faint
 Internal breezes, sobbings of the place
 And respirations from the roofless walls
 The shuddering ivy dripped large drops—yet still
 So sweetly 'mid the gloom the invisible bird 125
 Sang to herself, that there I could have made
 My dwelling-place, and lived for ever there
 To hear such music. Through the walls we flew
 And down the valley, and, a circuit made
 In wantonness of heart, through rough and smooth 130
 We scampered homewards. Oh, ye rocks and streams,
 And that still spirit shed from evening air!
 Even in this joyous time I sometimes felt
 Your presence, when with slackened step we breathed⁹
 Along the sides of the steep hills, or when 135
 Lighted by gleams of moonlight from the sea
 We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand.¹

Midway on long Winander's eastern shore,
 Within the crescent of a pleasant bay, 140
 A tavern stood; no homely-featured house,
 Primeval like its neighbouring cottages,
 But 'twas a splendid place, the door beset
 With chaises, grooms, and liveries, and within
 Decanters, glasses, and the blood-red wine.
 In ancient times, or ere the Hall was built 145
 On the large island, had this dwelling been
 More worthy of a poet's love, a hut
 Proud of its one bright fire and sycamore shade.²

- But though the rhymes were gone which once inscribed
 [150] The threshold, and large golden characters
 On the blue-frosted signboard had usurped
 The place of the old lion, in contempt
 And mockery of the rustic painter's hand, 160
 Yet to this hour the spot to me is dear
 [155] With all its foolish pomp. The garden lay
 Upon a slope surmounted by the plain
 Of a small bowling-green; beneath us stood
 A grove, with gleams of water through the trees 165
 And over the tree-tops—nor did we want
 [160] Refreshment, strawberries and mellow cream—
 And there through half an afternoon we played
 On the smooth platform, and the shouts we sent
 Made all the mountains ring. But ere the fall 170
 [165] Of night, when in our pinnace we returned
 Over the dusky lake, and to the beach
 Of some small island steered our course, with one,
 The minstrel of our troop,³ and left him there,
 And rowed off gently, while he blew his flute 175
 [170] Alone upon the rock, oh, then the calm
 And dead still water lay upon my mind
 Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky,
 Never before so beautiful, sank down
 Into my heart and held me like a dream. 180
 [175] Thus daily were my sympathies enlarged,
 And thus the common range of visible things
 Grew dear to me: already I began
 To love the sun, a boy I loved the sun
 Not as I since have loved him—as a pledge 185
 [180] And surety of our earthly life, a light
 Which while we view we feel we are alive—
 But for this cause, that I had seen him lay
 His beauty on the morning hills, had seen
 [185] The western mountain touch his setting orb 190
 In many a thoughtless hour, when from excess
 Of happiness my blood appeared to flow
 With its own pleasure, and I breathed with joy.
 And from like feelings, humble though intense,
 [190] To patriotic and domestic love 195
 Analogous, the moon to me was dear;
 For I would dream away my purposes
 Standing to look upon her, while she hung
 Midway between the hills as if she knew
 [195] No other region but belonged to thee, 200

3. Robert Greenwood, later Senior Fellow of Trinity, Cambridge, but remembered by Wordsworth's landlady Ann Tyson as

"t' lad wi' t' flute" (Thompson, pp. 78–79, 147).

But—though the rhymes were gone that once inscribed
 The threshold, and large golden characters, 150
 Spread o'er the spangled sign-board, had dislodged
 The old Lion and usurped his place, in slight
 And mockery of the rustic painter's hand—
 Yet, to this hour, the spot to me is dear
 With all its foolish pomp. The garden lay 155
 Upon a slope surmounted by the plain
 Of a small bowling-green; beneath us stood
 A grove, with gleams of water through the trees
 And over the tree-tops; nor did we want
 Refreshment, strawberries and mellow cream. 160
 There, while through half an afternoon we played
 On the smooth platform, whether skill prevailed
 Or happy blunder triumphed, bursts of glee
 Made all the mountains ring. But, ere night-fall,
 When in our pinnace we returned at leisure 165
 Over the shadowy lake, and to the beach
 Of some small island steered our course with one,
 The Minstrel of the Troop,³ and left him there,
 And rowed off gently, while he blew his flute
 Alone upon the rock—oh, then, the calm 170
 And dead still water lay upon my mind
 Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky,
 Never before so beautiful, sank down
 Into my heart, and held me like a dream!
 Thus were my sympathies enlarged, and thus 175
 Daily the common range of visible things
 Grew dear to me: already I began
 To love the sun; a boy I loved the sun,
 Not as I since have loved him, as a pledge
 And surety of our earthly life, a light 180
 Which we behold and feel we are alive;
 Nor for his bounty to so many worlds—
 But for this cause, that I had seen him lay
 His beauty on the morning hills, had seen
 The western mountains touch his setting orb, 185
 In many a thoughtless hour, when, from excess
 Of happiness, my blood appeared to flow
 For its own pleasure, and I breathed with joy.
 And, from like feelings, humble though intense,
 To patriotic and domestic love 190
 Analogous, the moon to me was dear;
 For I would dream away my purposes,
 Standing to gaze upon her while she hung
 Midway between the hills, as if she knew
 No other region, but belonged to thee, 195

Yea, appertained by a peculiar right
To thee and thy grey huts,⁴ my darling vale.

- Those incidental charms which first attached
My heart to rural objects, day by day
- [200] Grew weaker, and I hasten on to tell 205
How Nature, intervenient⁵ till this time
And secondary, now at length was sought
For her own sake. But who shall parcel out
His intellect by geometric rules,
- [205] Split like a province into round and square? 210
Who knows the individual hour in which
His habits were first sown even as a seed,
Who that shall⁶ point as with a wand, and say
"This portion of the river of my mind
- [210] Came from yon fountain"?⁷ Thou, my friend, art one 215
More deeply read in thy own thoughts; to thee
Science appears but what in truth she is,
Not as our glory and our absolute boast,
But as a succedaneum, and a prop
- [215] To our infirmity.⁸ Thou art no slave 220
Of that false secondary power by which
In weakness we create distinctions, then
Deem that our puny boundaries are things
Which we perceive, and not which we have made.
- [220] To thee, unblinded by these outward shows, 225
The unity of all has been revealed;
And thou wilt doubt with me, less aptly skilled
Than many are to class the cabinet
- [225] Of their sensations,⁹ and in voluble phrase¹ 230
Run through the history and birth of each
As of a single independent thing.
Hard task to analyse a soul,² in which
Not only general habits and desires,
But each most obvious and particular thought—
- [230] Not in a mystical and idle sense, 235
But in the words of reason deeply weighed—
Hath no beginning.

4. Cottages built of gray local stone.

5. Literally, "coming between"; Nature had asserted herself amid other preoccupations.

6. "Who is there that would be able to?"

7. For the importance of the river as an image of the mind see, e.g., *1805*, III, 10–12, IV, 39–55, XIII, 172–84, below.

8. *1805*, 216–20 (*1850*, 211–15), belonging probably to January 1804, define the attitude of Wordsworth—though surely not of Coleridge, to whom they are addressed—towards learning (Latin "*scientia*," not modern "science"). "Succedaneum": remedy (*NED*; in fact this is a misuse of the word).

9. To classify their feelings, as if they were exhibits in a display case. "Doubt" in *1805*, 227 (*1850*, 222) refers back to the possibility of "parcelling out" the intellect, *1805*, 208–15 (*1850*, 203–10).

1. Phraseology, style.
2. See *Paradise Lost*, V, 564, where Raphael speaks of relating the war in heaven as "Sad task and hard." As Maxwell suggests, this is "one of Wordsworth's implied claims for epic, or more than epic, status for his poem."

Yea, appertained by a peculiar right
 To thee and thy grey huts,⁴ thou one dear Vale!

Those incidental charms which first attached
 My heart to rural objects, day by day
 Grew weaker, and I hasten on to tell 200
 How Nature, intervenient⁵ till this time
 And secondary, now at length was sought
 For her own sake. But who shall parcel out
 His intellect by geometric rules,
 Split like a province into round and square? 205
 Who knows the individual hour in which
 His habits were first sown, even as a seed?
 Who that shall⁶ point as with a wand and say
 "This portion of the river of my mind
 Came from yon fountain?"⁷ Thou, my Friend! art one 210
 More deeply read in thy own thoughts; to thee
 Science appears but what in truth she is,
 Not as our glory and our absolute boast,
 But as a succedaneum, and a prop
 To our infirmity.⁸ No officious slave 215
 Art thou of that false secondary power
 By which we multiply distinctions, then
 Deem that our puny boundaries are things
 That we perceive, and not that we have made.
 To thee, unblinded by these formal arts, 220
 The unity of all hath been revealed,
 And thou wilt doubt with me, less aptly skilled
 Than many are to range the faculties
 In scale and order, class the cabinet
 Of their sensations,⁹ and in voluble phrase¹ 225
 Run through the history and birth of each
 As of a single independent thing.
 Hard task, vain hope, to analyse the mind,²
 If each most obvious and particular thought,
 Not in a mystical and idle sense, 230
 But in the words of Reason deeply weighed,
 Hath no beginning.

Blessed the infant babe—

- For with my best conjectures I would trace
 The progress of our being—blest the babe
 [235] Nursed in his mother's arms, the babe who sleeps. 240
 Upon his mother's breast, who, when his soul
 Claims manifest kindred with an earthly soul,³
 Doth gather passion from his mother's eye.
 Such feelings pass into his torpid life
 Like an awakening breeze, and hence his mind, 245
 Even in the first trial of its powers,
 Is prompt and watchful, eager to combine
 In one appearance all the elements
 And parts of the same object, else detached
 And loth to coalesce.⁴ Thus day by day 250
 Subjected to the discipline of love,
 His organs and recipient faculties
 Are quickened, are more vigorous; his mind spreads,
 Tenacious of the forms which it receives⁵
 In one beloved presence—nay and more, 255
 In that most apprehensive habitude⁶
 And those sensations which have been derived
 From this beloved presence—there exists
 A virtue which irradiates and exalts
 [240] All objects through all intercourse of sense.⁷ 260
 No outcast he, bewildered and depressed;
 Along his infant veins are interfused
 The gravitation and the filial bond
 [244] Of Nature that connect him with the world.⁸ 265
 Emphatically such a being lives,
 An inmate of this *active* universe.
 From Nature largely he receives, nor so
 Is satisfied, but largely gives again;
 [255] For feeling has to him imparted strength, 270
 And—powerful in all sentiments of grief,
 Of exultation, fear and joy—his mind,
 Even as an agent of the one great mind,

3. When his soul forms an evident relationship with the soul of another human being.

4. Emotion acts as a unifying factor because it awakens and alerts the mind, enabling it to make the basic imaginative step of forming parts into wholes; see line 275*n*, below.

5. Retentive of visual images.

6. In that relationship ("habitude") best suited to learning ("most apprehensive").

7. As F. R. Leavis pointed out (*Revaluation*, p. 160), there is a clear and interesting connection with *Tintern Abbey*, 101–2: "A motion and a spirit, that impels / All thinking things, all objects of

all thought * * *". For the child objects are irradiated and exalted by the "beloved presence" (1805, 255) of the mother, just as for the adult, consciousness of a disturbing transcendental "presence" (*Tintern Abbey*, 95) shows them to be impelled by "a motion and a spirit."

8. Innate in the child is a force pulling him towards the world ("gravitation"). In 1799, when these lines were written, Wordsworth sees this force as the "filial bond" of child and mother, which establishes the larger bond of man and Nature; for a very different position, see *Intimations Ode*, 67–84, of spring 1804.

Blest the infant Babe

(For with my best conjecture I would trace
 Our Being's earthly progress), blest the Babe,
 Nursed in his Mother's arms, who sinks to sleep. 235
 Rocked on his Mother's breast; who with his soul
 Drinks in the feelings of his Mother's eye!
 For him, in one dear Presence, there exists
 A virtue which irradiates and exalts
 Objects through widest intercourse of sense.⁷ 240
 No outcast he, bewildered and depressed:
 Along his infant veins are interfused
 The gravitation and the filial bond
 Of nature that connect him with the world.⁸
 Is there a flower, to which he points with hand 245
 Too weak to gather it, already love
 Drawn from love's purest earthly fount for him
 Hath beautified that flower; already shades
 Of pity cast from inward tenderness
 Do fall around him upon aught that bears 250
 Unsightly marks of violence or harm.
 Emphatically such a Being lives,
 Frail creature as he is, helpless as frail,
 An inmate of this active universe.
 For feeling has to him imparted power 255
 That through the growing faculties of sense
 Doth like an agent of the one great Mind

Creates, creator and receiver both,
 Working but in alliance with the works
 [260] Which it beholds.⁹ Such, verily, is the first 275
 Poetic spirit of our human life—
 By uniform controul of after years
 In most abated and suppressed, in some
 Through every change of growth or of decay
 [265] Preminent till death.¹ 280

From early days,
 Beginning not long after that first time
 In which, a babe, by intercourse of touch
 I held mute dialogues with my mother's heart,
 I have endeavoured to display the means
 [270] Whereby the infant sensibility, 285
 Great birthright of our being, was in me
 Augmented and sustained. Yet is a path
 More difficult before me, and I fear
 That in its broken windings we shall need
 [275] The chamois' sinews and the eagle's wing. 290
 For now a trouble came into my mind
 From unknown causes:³ I was left alone
 Seeking the visible world, nor knowing why.
 The props of my affections were removed,
 [280] And yet the building stood, as if sustained 295
 By its own spirit. All that I beheld
 Was dear to me, and from this cause it came
 That now to Nature's finer influxes⁴
 My mind lay open—to that more exact
 And intimate communion which our hearts 300
 Maintain with the minuter properties
 Of objects which already are beloved,
 And of those only.

Many are the joys
 [285] Of youth, but, oh, what happiness to live 305
 When every hour brings palpable access
 Of knowledge, when all knowledge is delight,
 And sorrow is not there. The seasons came,
 And every season to my notice brought
 [290] A store of transitory qualities

9. Strengthened by the mother's love, and working in harmony with external Nature, the child's mind shows itself to be creative as well as receptive. It is thus not merely an agent, but in its creativity a reflection, of the mind of God.

1. Wordsworth's lines imply a confidence that was not, of course, sustained; compare *1805*, XI, 337–38, below, written in

April 1805, "I see by glimpses now, when age comes on / May scarcely see at all."

3. Nature herself was the disturbing force, or "trouble." The chamois (*1805*, 290; *1850*, 275) is a mountain antelope of great agility, hunted in the Alps; see *Descriptive Sketches* (1793), 366–413.

4. Influences.

Create, creator and receiver both,
 Working but in alliance with the works
 Which it beholds.⁹—Such, verily, is the first 260
 Poetic spirit of our human life,
 By uniform control of after years,
 In most, abated or suppressed; in some,
 Through every change of growth and of decay,
 Pre-eminent till death.^{1,2} 265

From early days,
 Beginning not long after that first time
 In which, a Babe, by intercourse of touch
 I held mute dialogues with my Mother's heart,
 I have endeavoured to display the means 270
 Whereby this infant sensibility,
 Great birthright of our being, was in me
 Augmented and sustained. Yet is a path
 More difficult before me; and I fear
 That in its broken windings we shall need
 The chamois' sinews, and the eagle's wing: 275
 For now a trouble came into my mind
 From unknown causes.³ I was left alone
 Seeking the visible world, nor knowing why.
 The props of my affections were removed,
 And yet the building stood, as if sustained 280
 By its own spirit! All that I beheld
 Was dear, and hence to finer influxes⁴
 The mind lay open, to a more exact
 And close communication. Many are our joys
 In youth, but oh! what happiness to live 285
 When every hour brings palpable access
 Of knowledge, when all knowledge is delight,
 And sorrow is not there! The seasons came,
 And every season wheresoe'er I moved
 Unfolded transitory qualities, 290

2. Wordsworth's revisions of the passage on the Infant Babe (1805, 237–80) are found chiefly in *MS. D* (1832 and 1838/39). 1805, 244–57, 267–68, 270–71 are cut, and 1850, 245–51 and 53 inserted. The child's power and creativity are thus reduced—he now works “like,” where be-

fore he worked “as an agent of the one great mind”—and his responses have been sentimentalized. The result is a more credible baby, but a weakened statement of Wordsworth's intuition of strength drawn from the child-mother relationship.

- Which but for this most watchful power of love 310
 Had been neglected, left a register
 Of permanent relations else unknown.⁵
 Hence, life, and change, and beauty, solitude
 [295] More active even than 'best society',⁶ 315
 Society made sweet as solitude
 By silent inobtrusive sympathies,
 And gentle agitations of the mind
 From manifold distinctions,⁷ difference
 [300] Perceived in things where to the common eye 320
 No difference is, and hence, from the same source,
 Sublimer joy. For I would walk alone
 In storm and tempest,⁸ or in starlight nights
 Beneath the quiet heavens, and at that time
 Have felt whate'er there is of power in sound
 [305] To breathe an elevated mood, by form 325
 Or image unprofaned; and I would stand
 Beneath some rock, listening to sounds that are
 The ghostly language of the ancient earth,
 [310] Or make their dim abode in distant winds.⁹ 1 330
 Thence did I drink the visionary power.
 I deem not profitless those fleeting moods
 Of shadowy exultation; not for this,
 That they are kindred to our purer mind
 [315] And intellectual¹ life, but that the soul— 335
 Remembering how she felt, but what she felt
 Remembering not—retains an obscure sense²
 Of possible sublimity, to which
 With growing faculties she doth aspire,
 [320] With faculties still growing, feeling still 340
 That whatsoever point they gain they still
 Have something to pursue.

And not alone

- In grandeur and in tumult, but no less
 In tranquil scenes, that universal power
 [325] And fitness in the latent qualities 345
 And essences of things, by which the mind

5. Love of Nature makes the child responsive to whatever the seasons bring, creating from passing experience permanent relationships—permanent presumably in their effect upon the mind—that are recorded in the memory, and so known to have existed.

6. Wordsworth's quotation marks draw attention to *Paradise Lost*, IX, 249, "For solitude sometimes is best society."

7. The "gentle agitations" do not depend on "by" in the previous line; they are the last item in the list that follows

"Hence," in 1805, 313 (1850, 294).

8. 1805, 322–41 (1850, 303–22) were written, in the third person, in January–February 1798, probably to describe the narrator of *The Ruined Cottage*.

9. Compare *Intimations Ode*, 28: "The winds come to me from the fields of sleep." "Ghostly": spiritual; but also "disembodied."

1. In effect, "spiritual."

2. Scansion: an obscure sense; Milton too-sometimes stresses the first syllable.

Which, but for this most watchful power of love,
 Had been neglected; left a register
 Of permanent relations, else unknown.⁵
 Hence life, and change, and beauty, solitude
 More active even than 'best society'⁶— 295
 Society made sweet as solitude
 By inward concords, silent, inobtrusive
 And gentle agitations of the mind
 From manifold distinctions,⁷ difference
 Perceived in things, where, to the unwatchful eye, 300
 No difference is, and hence, from the same source,
 Sublimier joy; for I would walk alone,
 Under the quiet stars,⁸ and at that time
 Have felt whate'er there is of power in sound
 To breathe an elevated mood, by form 305
 Or image unprofaned; and I would stand,
 If the night blackened with a coming storm,
 Beneath some rock, listening to notes that are
 The ghostly language of the ancient earth,
 Or make their dim abode in distant winds.⁹ 310
 Thence did I drink the visionary power;
 And deem not profitless those fleeting moods
 Of shadowy exultation: not for this,
 That they are kindred to our purer mind
 And intellectual¹ life; but that the soul, 315
 Remembering how she felt, but what she felt
 Remembering not, retains an obscure sense²
 Of possible sublimity, whereto
 With growing faculties she doth aspire,
 With faculties still growing, feeling still 320
 That whatsoever point they gain, they yet
 Have something to pursue.

And not alone

'Mid gloom and tumult, but no less 'mid fair
 And tranquil scenes, that universal power
 And fitness in the latent qualities 325
 And essences of things, by which the mind

- Is moved by feelings of delight, to me
 Came strengthened with a superadded soul,
 A virtue not its own.³ My morning walks
 [330] Were early: oft before the hours of school 350
 I travelled round our little lake, five miles
 Of pleasant wandering—happy time, more dear
 For this, that one was by my side, a friend
 Then passionately loved.⁴ With heart how full
 [335] Will he peruse these lines, this page—perhaps 355
 A blank to other men—for many years
 Have since flowed in between us, and, our minds
 Both silent to each other, at this time
 We live as if those hours had never been.
 Nor seldom did I lift our cottage latch
 [340] Far earlier, and before the vernal thrush 360
 Was audible, among the hills I sate
 Alone upon some jutting eminence⁶
 At the first hour of morning, when the vale
 [345] Lay quiet in an utter solitude. 365
 How shall I trace the history, where seek
 The origin of what I then have felt?
 Oft in those moments such a holy calm
 Did overspread my soul that I forgot
 [350] That I had bodily eyes, and what I saw 370
 Appeared like something in myself, a dream,
 A prospect⁷ in my mind.

'Twere long to tell

- What spring and autumn, what the winter snows,
 And what the summer shade, what day and night,
 [355] The evening and the morning, what my dreams 375
 And what my waking thoughts, supplied to nurse
 That spirit of religious love in which
 I walked with Nature. But let this at least
 Be not forgotten, that I still retained
 [360] My first creative sensibility, 380
 That by the regular action of the world
 My soul was unsubdued. A plastic⁸ power
 Abode with me, a forming hand, at times
 Rebellious, acting in a devious mood,

3. To the power to please that natural objects have in and for themselves is added a virtue not their own—and not at all clearly defined. The "soul" is "superadded" to the inherent qualities of landscape, and yet "comes" to Wordsworth, rather than being, as one would expect, projected by him in a mood of "shadowy exultation" (1805, 331-32; 1850, 312-13).

4. School began at six or six-thirty in the summer months at Hawkshead and an hour later in the winter. The lake was Esthwaite Water; the friend, John Fleming, is enthusiastically referred to in *The Vale of Esthwaite* (1785-87).

6. Compare Thomson's *Seasons*, II, 1042, "Sad on the jutting eminence he sits."

7. View, landscape.

8. Formative, creative.

Is moved with feelings of delight, to me
 Came strengthened with a superadded soul,
 A virtue not its own.³ My morning walks
 Were early;—oft before the hours of school 330
 I travelled round our little lake, five miles
 Of pleasant wandering. Happy time! more dear
 For this, that one was by my side, a Friend
 Then passionately loved;⁴ with heart how full
 Would he peruse these lines! For many years 335
 Have since flowed in between us, and, our minds
 Both silent to each other, at this time
 We live as if those hours had never been.
 Nor seldom did I lift our cottage latch
 Far earlier, and ere one smoke-wreath had risen 340
 From human dwelling, or the thrush, high perched,
 Piped to the woods his shrill *reveill e*,⁵ sate
 Alone upon some jutting eminence,⁶
 At the first gleam of dawn-light, when the Vale,
 Yet slumbering, lay in utter solitude. 345
 How shall I seek the origin? where find
 Faith in the marvellous things which then I felt?
 Oft in these moments such a holy calm
 Would overspread my soul, that bodily eyes
 Were utterly forgotten, and what I saw 350
 Appeared like something in myself, a dream,
 A prospect⁷ in the mind.

'Twere long to tell
 What spring and autumn, what the winter snows,
 And what the summer shade, what day and night,
 Evening and morning, sleep and waking thought, 355
 From sources inexhaustible, poured forth
 To feed the spirit of religious love
 In which I walked with Nature. But let this
 Be not forgotten, that I still retained
 My first creative sensibility; 360
 That by the regular action of the world
 My soul was unsubdued. A plastic⁸ power
 Abode with me; a forming hand, at times
 Rebellious, acting in a devious mood;

5. Lines 341–42 belong to 1838/39 and were omitted by the poet's executors. The reading of the first edition—"or the ver-

nal thrush / Was audible; and sate among the woods"—seems to have been invented by them on the basis of MS. C.

- [365] A local spirit of its own, at war
 With general tendency, but for the most 385
 Subservient strictly to the external things
 With which it communed.⁹ An auxiliar light
 Came from my mind, which on the setting sun
- [370] Bestowed new splendor; the melodious birds,
 The gentle breezes, fountains that ran on 390
 Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obeyed
 A like dominion, and the midnight storm
 Grew darker in the presence of my eye.
- [375] Hence my obeisance, my devotion hence,
 And hence my transport.¹ 395
- Nor should this, perchance,
 Pass unrecorded, that I still² had loved
 The exercise and produce of a toil
 Than analytic industry to me
- [380] More pleasing, and whose character I deem 400
 Is more poetic, as resembling more
 Creative agency—I mean to speak
 Of that interminable building reared
 By observation of affinities
- [385] In objects where no brotherhood exists
 To common minds. My seventeenth year was come, 405
 And, whether from this habit rooted now
 So deeply in my mind, or from excess
 Of the great social principle of life
- [390] Coercing all things into sympathy,
 To unorganic natures I transferred 410
 My own enjoyments, or, the power of truth
 Coming in revelation, I conversed
 With things that really are, I at this time
- [395] Saw blessings spread around me like a sea.³
 Thus did my days pass on, and now at length 415
 From Nature and her overflowing soul
 I had received so much that all my thoughts
 Were steeped in feeling. I was only then
- [400] Contented when with bliss ineffable
 I felt the sentiment of being spread 420
 O'er all that moves, and all that seemeth still,

9. Wordsworth is saying that his creativity, though at times capricious in its refusal to conform, was for the most part stabilized by subordination to Nature.

1. Wordsworth's submission and devotion to Nature, and the joy that he derives from her, are paradoxically based on the fact that she is herself subordinate to his creative sensibility. "Transport": exaltation, extreme emotion.

2. Always.

3. Wordsworth appears in 1805, 405–14 (1850, 386–95) to be offering three alternatives, when in fact he offers two, of which the first is subdivided. The boy either transfers his own enjoyments to inanimate ("unorganic") Nature—through excess of fellow feeling—or he rightly perceives the existence of a shared life-force.

A local spirit of his own, at war 365
 With general tendency, but, for the most,
 Subservient strictly to external things
 With which it communed.⁹ An auxiliar light
 Came from my mind, which on the setting sun
 Bestowed new splendour; the melodious birds, 370
 The fluttering breezes, fountains that ran on
 Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obeyed
 A like dominion, and the midnight storm
 Grew darker in the presence of my eye:
 Hence my obeisance, my devotion hence, 375
 And hence my transport.¹

Nor should this, perchance,
 Pass unrecorded, that I still² had loved
 The exercise and produce of a toil,
 Than analytic industry to me 380
 More pleasing, and whose character I deem
 Is more poetic as resembling more
 Creative agency. The song would speak
 Of that interminable building reared
 By observation of affinities
 In objects where no brotherhood exists 385
 To passive minds. My seventeenth year was come;
 And, whether from this habit rooted now
 So deeply in my mind, or from excess
 In the great social principle of life
 Coercing all things into sympathy, 390
 To unorganic natures were transferred
 My own enjoyments; or the power of truth
 Coming in revelation, did converse
 With things that really are; I, at this time,
 Saw blessings spread around me like a sea.³ 395
 Thus while the days flew by, and years passed on,
 From Nature overflowing on my soul,
 I had received so much, that every thought
 Was steeped in feeling; I was only then
 Contented, when with bliss ineffable 400
 I felt the sentiment of Being spread
 O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still;

- O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
 And human knowledge, to the human eye
 [405] Invisible, yet liveth to the heart,
 O'er all that leaps, and runs, and shouts, and sings, 425
 Or beats the gladsome air, o'er all that glides
 Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself
 And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not
 [410] If such my transports were, for in all things
 I saw one life, and felt that it was joy; 430
 [415] One song they sang, and it was audible—
 Most audible then when the fleshly ear,
 O'ercome by grosser prelude of that strain,
 Forgot its functions and slept undisturbed.⁵
- If this be error, and another faith 435
 [420] Find easier access to the pious mind,
 Yet were I grossly destitute of all
 Those human sentiments which make this earth
 So dear if I should fail with grateful voice
 To speak of you, ye mountains, and ye lakes 440
 [425] And sounding cataracts, ye mists and winds
 That dwell among the hills where I was born.
 If in my youth I have been pure in heart,
 If, mingling with the world, I am content
 With my own modest pleasures, and have lived 445
 [430] With God and Nature communing, removed
 From little enmities and low desires,
 The gift is yours; if in these times of fear,
 This melancholy waste of hopes o'erthrown,⁶
 If, 'mid indifference and apathy 450
 [435] And wicked exultation, when good men
 On every side fall off we know not how
 To selfishness, disguised in gentle names
 Of peace and quiet and domestic love—
 Yet mingled, not unwillingly, with sneers 455
 [440] On visionary minds⁷—if, in this time
 Of dereliction and dismay, I yet
 Despair not of our nature, but retain
 A more than Roman confidence, a faith

5. 1805, 416–34 (1850, 396–418) were written as third-person narrative for *The Ruined Cottage* in February–March 1798. Hearing the song of the One Life (1805, 431), like seeing into the “life of things” in *Tintern Abbey*, 50, is a metaphor that should not be taken too literally. The “grosser prelude” (line 433) can stand for any external stimulus.

6. The sudden entrance into the poem of a concern with the destruction of hopes

aroused in the early days of the French Revolution derives from a Coleridge letter of ca. September 1799, quoted in 1799, II, 484n, above. “Waste”: desert.

7. See, e.g., Hazlitt’s description in *The Spirit of the Age* (1825) of the notorious lectures of 1799 in which Sir James Mackintosh, one-time apologist for the French Revolution (*Vindiciae Gallicae*, 1791), abjured earlier friends and opinions; Howe, XI, pp. 98–100.

O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
 And human knowledge, to the human eye
 Invisible, yet liveth to the heart; 405
 O'er all that leaps and runs, and shouts and sings,
 Or beats the gladsome air; o'er all that glides
 Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself,
 And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not
 If high the transport, great the joy I felt, 410
 Communing in this sort through earth and heaven
 With every form of creature, as it looked
 Towards the Uncreated with a countenance
 Of adoration, with an eye of love.⁴
 One song they sang, and it was audible, 415
 Most audible, then, when the fleshly ear,
 O'ercome by humblest prelude of that strain,
 Forgot her functions, and slept undisturbed.⁵

If this be error, and another faith
 Find easier access to the pious mind, 420
 Yet were I grossly destitute of all
 Those human sentiments that make this earth
 So dear, if I should fail with grateful voice
 To speak of you, ye mountains, and ye lakes
 And sounding cataracts; ye mists and winds 425
 That dwell among the hills where I was born.
 If in my youth I have been pure in heart,
 If, mingling with the world, I am content
 With my own modest pleasures, and have lived
 With God and Nature communing, removed 430
 From little enmities and low desires,
 The gift is yours; if in these times of fear,
 This melancholy waste of hopes o'erthrown,⁶
 If, 'mid indifference and apathy
 And wicked exultation, when good men 435
 On every side fall off we know not how,
 To selfishness, disguised in gentle names
 Of peace and quiet and domestic love,
 Yet mingled not unwillingly with sneers
 On visionary minds;⁷ if, in this time 440
 Of dereliction and dismay, I yet
 Despair not of our nature, but retain
 A more than Roman confidence, a faith

4. Wordsworth preserved the pantheist assertion of 1805, lines 429–30, written at Alfoxden in 1798, until his final revision of *The Prelude* in, or after, 1839;

but he then replaced it with lines designed precisely to emphasize the difference between God, "the Uncreated," and His Creation.

- That fails not, in all sorrow my support, 460
 [445] The blessing of my life, the gift is yours
 Ye mountains, thine, O Nature. Thou hast fed
 My lofty speculations, and in thee
 For this uneasy heart of ours I find
 [450] A never-failing principle of joy 465
 And purest passion.

- Thou, my friend, wert reared
 In the great city, 'mid far other scenes,⁸
 But we by different roads at length have gained
 The self-same bourne. And for this cause to thee
- [455] I speak unapprehensive of contempt, 470
 The insinuated scoff of coward tongues,
 And all that silent language which so oft
 In conversation betwixt man and man
 Blots from the human countenance all trace
- [460] Of beauty and of love. For thou hast sought 475
 The truth in solitude, and thou art one
 The most intense of Nature's worshippers,
- [465] In many things my brother, chiefly here
 In this my deep devotion. Fare thee well.
 Health and the quiet of a healthful mind 480
 Attend thee, seeking oft the haunts of men—
 And yet more often living with thyself,
 [470] And for thyself—so haply shall thy days
 Be many, and a blessing to mankind.¹

8. A verbatim quotation from Coleridge's *Frost at Midnight*, 51–52; see 1799, II, 497n, above.

1. For the original circumstances of this farewell, see 1799, II, 514n, above.

That fails not, in all sorrow my support,
 The blessing of my life; the gift is yours, 445
 Ye winds and sounding cataracts! 'tis yours,
 Ye mountains! thine, O Nature! Thou hast fed
 My lofty speculations; and in thee,
 For this uneasy heart of ours, I find
 A never-failing principle of joy 450
 And purest passion.

Thou, my Friend! wert reared
 In the great city, 'mid far other scenes;⁸
 But we, by different roads, at length have gained
 The self-same bourne. And for this cause to thee
 I speak, unapprehensive of contempt, 455
 The insinuated scoff of coward tongues,
 And all that silent language which so oft
 In conversation between man and man
 Blots from the human countenance all trace
 Of beauty and of love. For thou hast sought 460
 The truth in solitude, and, since the days
 That gave thee liberty, full long desired,
 To serve in Nature's temple, thou hast been
 The most assiduous of her ministers;⁹
 In many things my brother, chiefly here 465
 In this our deep devotion.

Fare thee well!
 Health and the quiet of a healthful mind
 Attend thee! seeking oft the haunts of men,
 And yet more often living with thyself,
 And for thyself, so haply shall thy days 470
 Be many, and a blessing to mankind.¹

9. Lines 461-64 are among Wordsworth's final revisions, made at least five years after Coleridge's death in 1834.