

WORDSWORTH'S *PRELUDE* : FIVE

1. Those walks did now, like a returning spring,
Come back on me again. When first I made
Once more the Circuit of our little Lake
If ever happiness hath lodg'd with man,
That day consummate happiness was mine, 130
Wide-spreading, steady, calm, contemplative.
The sun was set, or setting, when I left
Our cottage door, and evening soon brought on
A sober hour, not winning or serene,
For cold and raw the air was, and untun'd: 135
But, as a face we love is sweetest then
When sorrow damps it, or, whatever look
It chance to wear, is sweetest if the heart
Have fulness in itself, even so with me
It fared that evening. Gently did my soul 140
Put off her veil, and, self-transmuted, stood
Naked as in the presence of her God.
As on I walk'd a comfort seemed to touch
A heart that had not been disconsolate;
Strength came where weakness was not known to be, 145
At least not felt; and restoration came,
Like an intruder, knocking at the door
Of unacknowledged [weariness]. I took
The balance in my hand, and weigh'd myself.
I saw but little, and thereat was pleas'd; 150
Little did I remember, and even this
Still pleas'd me more; but I had hopes, and peace
And swellings of the spirits; was wrapp'd and sooth'd;
Convers'd with promises; had glimmering views
How life pervades the undecaying mind, 155
How the immortal Soul with God-like power
Informs, creates, and thaws the deepest sleep
That time can lay upon her; how on earth,
Man, if he do but live within the light
Of high endeavours, daily spreads abroad 160
His being with a strength that cannot fail.
Nor was there want of milder thoughts, of love,
Of innocence, and holiday repose;
And more than pastoral quiet, in the heart
Of amplest projects; and a peaceful end 165
At last, or glorious, by endurance won.
Thus musing, in a wood I sate me down,
[Alone] continuing there to muse; meanwhile,
The mountain heights were slowly overspread
With darkness; and before a rippling breeze 170
The long Lake lengthen'd out its hoary line:
And, in the shelter'd coppice where I sate,

Lost sight of it, bewilder'd and engulph'd
 Then given it greeting, as it rose once more
 With strength, reflecting in its solemn breast 180
 The works of man and face of human life.

William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805-6), XIII, 166-181; ed. Mark L. Reed (2 vols, Ithaca, N.Y., 1991), I, pp. 317-8. At this stage in his retrospect Wordsworth attempts a reconciliation of imagination as both intimately personal in origin and capable also of issuing into an ordered civic emplacement, along Enlightenment lines. For Coleridge's disagreements see *Biographia Literaria*, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (2 vols, Princeton, 1983), I, pp. 293-4, also James Engell, *The Creative Imagination; Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), pp. 355-7. Jonathan Wordsworth also has a full, instructive note: *The Prelude: the Four Texts*, p. 660. For larger discussion of the primary and secondary imagination in both Wordsworth and Coleridge see Thomas McFarland, *Originality and Imagination* (Baltimore and London, 1985).

6. Ye Presences of Nature, in the sky
 Or on the earth! Ye visions of the hills!
 And Souls of lonely places! can I think
 A vulgar hope was yours when Ye employ'd
 Such ministry, [when] Ye through many a year 495
 Haunting me thus among my boyish sports,
 On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills,
 Impressed upon all forms the characters
 Of danger or desire, and thus did make
 The surface of the universal earth 500
 With triumph, and delight, and hope, and fear
 Work like a sea.

William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805-6), I, 491-502; ed. Mark L. Reed (2 vols, Ithaca, N.Y., 1991), I, p. 120; compare 'workings of one mind', *The Prelude* (1805-6), VI, 568. For the earlier draft of MS. JJ (DC MS. 19) see Stephen Parrish (ed.), *The Prelude, 1798-1799* (Ithaca, N.Y. and Hassocks, 1977), pp. 105, 125, also discussion, pp. 3-36. See further Anthony John Harding, 'Imaginative Animism in Wordsworth's 1798-1799 *Prelude*', in his *The Reception of Myth in English Romanticism* (Columbia, Mo., 1995), pp. 70 ff.

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