

WORDSWORTH'S *PRELUDE* : SIX

1. By influence habitual to the mind
The mountain's outline and its steady form
Gives a pure grandeur; and its presence shapes
The measure and the prospect of the soul 725
To majesty; such virtue have the forms
Perennial of the ancient hills; nor less
The changeful language of their countenances
Gives movement to the thoughts, and multitude,
With order and relation. 730

William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805-6), VII, 722-30; ed. Mark L. Reed (2 vols, Ithaca, N.Y., 1991), I, p. 211. The tacit play on *give* as (a) 'impart', (b) 'freely bestow, donate', may hardly be called *play*, in view of the typically serious generosity in such overflows of meaning; yet as an ardent democrat Hazlitt for one would have found acute discomfort in this grand talk about 'majesty'. Good discussion in Albert O. Wlecke, *Wordsworth and the Sublime* (Berkeley, Cal., 1973), pp. 60-1.

2. There have I seen a comely Bachelor,
Fresh from a toilette of two hours, ascend
The Pulpit; with seraphic glance look up;
And, in a tone elaborately low 550
Beginning, lead his voice through many a maze,
A minuet course; and winding up his mouth,
From time to time, into an orifice
Most delicate, a lurking eyelet, small
And only not invisible, again 555
Open it out, diffusing thence a smile
Of rapt irradiation exquisite.
Meanwhile the Evangelists, Isiah, Job,
Moses, and he who penn'd the other day
The Death of Abel, Shakespear, Doctor Young 560
And Ossian, (doubt not, 'tis the naked truth)
Summon'd from streamy Morven, each and all
Must in their turn lend ornaments and flowers
To entwine the Crook of eloquence with which
This pretty Shepherd, pride of all the Plains, 565
Leads up and down his captivated Flock.

William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805-6), VII, 547-66; ed. Mark L. Reed (2 vols, Ithaca, N.Y., 1991), I, p. 207. The debt of this portrait to William Cowper's scorn for pulpit theatricals in *The Task* (1785), Book II, 408-62, is

William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805-6), V, 531-47; ed. Mark L. Reed (2 vols, Ithaca, N.Y., 1991), I, pp. 174-5. Reed discusses the textual difficulty of 'when' in line 547, later revised to 'where' as possibly 'the word intended all along' (p. 175). See also Geoffrey Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-1814* (New Haven, 1964), p. 226. For Burke on knowledge and power see Frances Ferguson, *Solitude and the Sublime; Romanticism and the Aesthetics of Individuation* (New York, 1992), Chap. 2.

5. And, though full oft the objects of our love
 Were false, and in their splendour overwrought,
 Yet, surely, at such times no vulgar power 595
 Was working in us, nothing less in truth
 Than that most noble attribute of man,
 Though yet untutor'd and inordinate,
 That wish for something loftier, more adorn'd,
 Than is the common aspect, daily garb 600
 Of human life.

William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805-6), V, 593-601; ed. Mark L. Reed (2 vols, Ithaca, N.Y., 1991), I, pp. 176. De Quincey confirms that the earlier poets whom Wordsworth had in mind here were Goldsmith and Gray; see Thomas de Quincey, *Recollections of the Lakes and the Lake Poets*, ed. David Wright (Harmondsworth, 1970), p. 166. Again Hazlitt would have looked to defend the 'common aspect' against nobility and splendour; yet Wordsworth wishes to see what lies between them as a channel rather than a barrier (compare 'common dawn', below).

6. There are in our existence spots of time,
 Which with distinct preeminence retain
 A renovating Virtue, whence, depress'd 260
 By false opinion and contentious thought,
 Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight
 In trivial occupations, and the round
 Of ordinary intercourse, our minds
 Are nourish'd, and invisibly repair'd, 265
 A virtue by which pleasure is enhanced
 That penetrates, enables us to mount
 When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.
 This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks
 Among those passages of life in which 270
 We have had deepest feeling that the mind
 Is lord and master, and that outward sense
 Is but the obedient servant of her will.
 Such moments, worthy of all gratitude,
 Are scatter'd every where, taking their date 275
 From our first childhood; in our childhood even
 Perhaps are most conspicuous. Life with me

As far as memory can look back, is full
Of this beneficent influence.

William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805-6), XIV, 258-795; ed. Mark L. Reed (2 vols, Ithaca, N.Y., 1991), I, p. 301. For extended contexts and discussion see Geoffrey Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-1814* (New Haven, 1964), pp. 211-19; David Ellis, *Wordsworth, Freud and the Spots of Time; Interpretation in 'The Prelude'* (Cambridge, 1985); also, Nicholas Roe, *The Politics of Nature: Wordsworth and Some Contemporaries* (London, 1992), pp. 107-9; Gregory Dart, *Rousseau, Robespierre and English Romanticism* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 200-202; Jon Mee, 'Wordsworth's Chastened Enthusiasm' in his *Romanticism, Enthusiasm and Regulation; Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period* (Oxford, 2003), esp. pp. 239-56.

7. Two miles I had to walk along the fields
Before I reach'd my home. Magnificent 330
The Morning was, a memorable pomp,
More glorious than I ever had beheld;
The Sea was laughing at a distance; all
The solid Mountains were as bright as clouds,
Grain-tinctured, drench'd in empyrean light; 335
And, in the meadows and the lower grounds,
Was all the sweetness of a common dawn,
Dews, vapours, and the melody of birds,
And Labourers going forth into the fields.
--Ah! need I say, dear Friend, that to the brim 340
My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows
Were then made for me; bond unknown to me
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
A dedicated Spirit. On I walk'd
In blessedness which even yet remains. 345

William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805-6), IV, 329-45; ed. Mark L. Reed (2 vols, Ithaca, N.Y., 1991), I, pp. 158-9. 'Grain-tinctured' invokes a scarlet dyestuff, describing the crimson of the sky at dawn; Hartman described this bridal moment as 'a marriage of heaven and earth' (Geoffrey Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-1814* [New Haven, 1964], pp. 223-4), and compare stanzas IV and V of Coleridge's 'Dejection: An Ode', 1817 text, first composed in 1802 (see S.M. Parrish, *Coleridge's 'Dejection'; The earliest Manuscripts and the Earliest Printings* [Ithaca, N.Y., 1988], pp. 55, 57; on Wordsworth's closeness to this poem see Thomas McFarland, *Romanticism and the Forms of Ruin; Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Modalities of Fragmentation* [Princeton, 1981], pp. 74-81). For the most complete text-history of 'Dejection' see Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Poetical Works*, ed. J.C.C. Mays (3 vols in 6, Princeton, 2001), II pt 2, pp. 884-97. Jonathan Wordsworth comments on the 1850 revisions to this passage in *The Prelude: the Four Texts (1798, 1799, 1805, 1850)*, p. 576.

8. And afterwards, the wind and sleety rain
 And all the business of the elements,
 The single sheep, and the one blasted tree,
 And the bleak music of that old stone wall,
 The noise of wood and water, and the mist 380
 Which on the line of each of those two Roads
 Advanced in such indisputable shapes,
 All these were spectacles and sounds to which
 I often would repair, and thence would drink
 As at a fountain. 385

William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805-6), XI, 376-85; ed. Mark L. Reed (2 vols, Ithaca, N.Y., 1991), I, p. 304. Again there is a suggestive note to this passage in Jonathan Wordsworth's *The Prelude; The Four Texts (1798, 1799, 1805, 1850)*, pp. 649-50; for fuller comment, see Geoffrey Hartman, *The Unremarkable Wordsworth* (London, 1987), pp. 168-72.

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