

Lines<sup>1</sup>

*Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of  
the Wye during a Tour, July 13, 1798*

Five years have past; five summers, with the length  
Of five long winters! and again I hear  
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs  
With a soft inland murmur.—Once again  
5 Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,  
That on a wild secluded scene impress  
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect  
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.  
The day is come when I again repose  
10 Here, under this dark sycamore, and view  
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,  
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,  
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves  
'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see  
15 These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines  
Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,  
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke  
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!  
With some uncertain notice, as might seem  
20 Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,  
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire  
The Hermit sits alone.

These beauteous forms,  
Through a long absence, have not been to me  
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:  
25 But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them  
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;  
And passing even into my purer mind,  
30 With tranquil restoration:—feelings too  
Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,  
As have no slight or trivial influence  
On that best portion of a good man's life,  
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts  
35 Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,  
To them I may have owed another gift,

<sup>1</sup> No poem of mine was composed under circumstances more pleasant for me to remember than this. I began it upon leaving Tintern, after crossing the Wye, and concluded it just as I was entering the forest in the evening, after a ramble of 4 or 5 days, with my sister. Not a line of it was altered, and not one part of it written down till I reached Bristol (Wordsworth's note). The poem was printed as the last poem in *Lyrical Ballads*.

Wordsworth had first visited the Wye valley and

the ruins of Tintern Abbey, in Monmouthshire, while on a solitary walking tour in August 1793, when he was twenty-three years old. The puzzling difference between the present landscape and the remembered "picture of the mind" (line 61) gives rise to an intricately organized meditation, in which the poet reviews his past, evaluates the present, and (through his sister as intermediary) anticipates the future: he ends by rounding back quietly on the scene that had been his point of departure.

Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,  
 In which the burthen of the mystery,  
 In which the heavy and the weary weight  
 40 Of all this unintelligible world,  
 Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,  
 In which the affections gently lead us on,—  
 Until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
 And even the motion of our human blood  
 45 Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
 In body, and become a living soul:  
 While with an eye made quiet by the power  
 Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
 We see into the life of things.

If this

50 Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft—  
 In darkness and amid the many shapes  
 Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir  
 Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,  
 Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—  
 55 How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,  
 O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,  
 How often has my spirit turned to thee!

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,  
 With many recognitions dim and faint,  
 60 And somewhat of a sad perplexity,  
 The picture of the mind revives again:  
 While here I stand, not only with the sense  
 Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts  
 That in this moment there is life and food  
 65 For future years. And so I dare to hope,  
 Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first  
 I came among these hills; when like a roe  
 I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides  
 Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,  
 70 Wherever nature led: more like a man  
 Flying from something that he dreads, than one  
 Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then  
 (The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,  
 And their glad animal movements all gone by)  
 75 To me was all in all.—I cannot paint  
 What then I was. The sounding cataract  
 Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,  
 The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
 Their colours and their forms, were then to me  
 80 An appetite; a feeling and a love,  
 That had no need of a remoter charm,  
 By thought supplied, nor any interest  
 Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,  
 And all its aching joys are now no more,

85 And all its dizzy raptures.<sup>2</sup> Not for this  
 Faint<sup>o</sup> I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts  
 Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,  
 Abundant recompense. For I have learned  
To look on nature, not as in the hour  
 90 Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes  
 The still, sad music of humanity,  
 Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power  
 To chasten and subdue. And I have felt  
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
 95 Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
 Of something far more deeply interfused,  
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
 And the round ocean and the living air,  
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:  
 100 A motion and a spirit, that impels  
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
 And rolls through all things. (Therefore am I still  
 A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
 And mountains; and of all that we behold  
 105 From this green earth; of all the mighty world  
 Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,<sup>3</sup>  
 And what perceive; well pleased to recognise  
 In nature and the language of the sense,  
 The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
 110 The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
 Of all my moral being.

Nor perchance,  
 If I were not thus taught, should I the more  
 Suffer my genial spirits<sup>4</sup> to decay:  
 For thou art with me here upon the banks  
 115 Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,<sup>5</sup>  
 My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch  
 The language of my former heart, and read  
 My former pleasures in the shooting lights  
 Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while  
 120 May I behold in thee what I was once,  
 My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,  
 Knowing that Nature never did betray  
 The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,  
 Through all the years of this our life, to lead  
 125 From joy to joy: for she can so inform  
 The mind that is within us, so impress

lose heart

Lines 66ff. contain Wordsworth's famed meditation of the three stages of his growing up, framed in terms of his evolving relations to the "dear friend": the young boy's purely physical responsiveness (lines 73-74); the postadolescent's "strong, deep, and equivocal passions"—a love that is "like a dread" (lines 67-72, 75-85; this was his state of mind on the occasion of his first visit);

his present state (lines 85ff.), in which for the first time he adds thought to sense.

3. This view that the "creative sensibility" contributes to its own perceptions is often reiterated in *The Prelude*.

4. Creative powers. ("Genial" is here the adjectival form of the noun "genius.")

5. His sister, Dorothy.

With quietness and beauty, and so feed  
 With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,  
 Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,  
 130 Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all  
 The dreary intercourse of daily life,  
 Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb  
 Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold  
 Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon  
 135 Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;  
 And let the misty mountain-winds be free  
 To blow against thee: and, in after years,  
 When these wild ecstasies shall be matured  
 Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind  
 140 Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,  
 Thy memory be as a dwelling-place  
 For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,  
 If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,  
 Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts  
 145 Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,  
 And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance—  
 If I should be where I no more can hear  
 Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams  
 Of past existence<sup>6</sup>—wilt thou then forget  
 150 That on the banks of this delightful stream  
 We stood together; and that I, so long  
 A worshipper of Nature, hither came  
 Unwearied in that service; rather say  
 With warmer love—oh! with far deeper zeal  
 155 Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,  
 That after many wanderings, many years  
 Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,  
 And this green pastoral landscape, were to me  
 More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!