

Word Worth®

World Magazine of Ideas and the Arts™ — September & October 2015.

Volume XV, Issue 5

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Front Page

Welcome to September and October's **Word Worth® Magazine**. Our [Editorial](#) this month is by M H Perry on William Wordsworth; our [Column](#) is about the Romantic poetry movement of which Wordsworth was the ultimate representative. In the [Arts](#) section, we are presenting one of our Rediscovering: this month William Wordsworth.

If we cannot discuss rationally and respectfully the issues concerning our governance, this democracy will not last.

—M H Perry

Archives — Our archives are stored at www.wordworth.org

Word Worth's mission is to publish Editorials and Columns on subjects as diverse as xeriscaping, travel, archaeology, and many others, and to present fine poetry, stories, novels, and photography in the Arts section. The opinions presented are those of the individual writers, and not necessarily those of *Word Worth*. We do not shy away from controversial subjects, but we believe in dealing with them respectfully and rationally. In one of his relatively more recent concerts, Arlo Guthrie said that over the years he had made friends that he might not have expected to make initially. He concluded that there are two kinds of people: those who care and those who don't. He came to realize that you can find both of those kinds on every side of every issue. We concur with that sentiment, and hope to present ideas in the spirit of enlightened searching.

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Editorials

Rediscovering William Wordsworth

M H Perry

In the Arts page this month, we again have one of our rediscovering presentations. William Wordsworth, one of the very greatest poets of all times, was the major figure in the Romantic Poetry movement in England in the beginning of the 19th century. That movement was primarily characterized by a devotion to nature (not by love and romance). The first poem on the Arts is “The World Is Too ...”, a sonnet written in the Petrarchan form, a particularly challenging one in the English language. It’s an appropriate choice for this time of year when nearly everyone is decrying the commercialism of the holiday season while flustered about how to limit that.

Wordsworth’s “Intimations Ode” is one of the best loved poems through the ages and would probably have cemented the poet’s reputation had he written nothing else. The poem taps into ponderings that are probably universal in the human consciousness: “Where did I come from?...Where will I go?”

The epigraph is from one of Wordsworth’s earlier poems and states that what we are as a child determines what we are as adults, and the poet feels that he will live a good life if he continues the devotion to Nature that he had as a child.

The setting is a field where Wordsworth played as a child. It’s May, and with him are his wife, his children, and his sister Dorothy to whom he was particularly close. She is actually the one he refers to as a happy shepherd boy in stanza three. In the beginning of the poem he expresses the pain he feels at not being able to see things the way he did as a child when every common sight seemed magical, “apparelled in celestial light.” He’s unable to reclaim that joy. People who grew up in the Christian tradition have similar feelings after they can no longer feel the wonder of Santa Claus and the decorated tree with presents miraculously appearing on Christmas morning.

In the second stanza, he acknowledges that there are many joys and beauties on the earth, still, “The things which I have seen I now can see no more.”

In the fourth stanza, Wordsworth is determined not to cast a pall on the joy the children still feel and to celebrate the day, but then he sees a tree and a flower that remind him of the way he used to see the world and asks the most famous lines “Whither is fled the visionary gleam?”

/Where is it now, the glory and the dream?”

In the fifth through eighth stanzas, he moves beyond the ideas of loss to the overwhelming questions of the Cosmos and of our place in it. The ideas are those recently posited by my coffee comrades who were unfamiliar with the work. That disparate people thought the same thing led to the group postulating the same idea that Carl Jung developed of a “racial [meaning genetic, species] memory.”

In the 10th and 11th stanzas, there is resolution. The oft quoted and most beautiful lines:

What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now forever taken from my sight,
 Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendor in the grass, of glory in the flower...

—lead to the compensation for that loss which is the “years that bring the philosophic mind.” All those glories that we knew in childhood, “having been must ever be,” and knowledge gives us deeper, though less immediate love of the world.

Comment on this Editorial at [Word Worth Comments](#)

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Columns

Romanticism

M H Perry

Romantic poetry has nothing to do with love poetry—which may be a surprise to you. All the schools of poetry had love poems among their collections.

There are three characteristics that signified the rise of Romanticism:

1. a humanitarian theme
2. written in the language of the common person
3. a devotion to Nature

William Blake was the first of the Romantics, and William Wordsworth was the ultimate of the school.

During the 1960's and 70's, protest poetry grew up that focused on the Viet Nam War and all the wrongs involved with it. Protest poetry seemed to be a new thing at that time, but it wasn't. Blake was likely the first of the protest poets, protesting injustices in society. "The Chimney Sweeper" is one of the clearest examples of this.

During Blake's time, there was little done about orphans, and they were usually subjected to starvation. Boys could be taken in as chimney sweepers, but this was not a good thing. Their lifestyle is chronicled in Blake's poem. They were fed practically nothing. They spent daylight hour sweeping out chimneys. They had little cover when they were cold, and never had the chance to bathe the soot from their hair and skin. Most people in the year 2007 feel deprived if they can't shower every day. These boys never had the chance to wash, and, of course, most died soon. This boy said that his father sold him when he was very young. Legally, that would not have been the case. Slavery had been illegal in England for a very long time. Effectively, however, that is what it amounted to. For a small sum of money a parent or guardian could turn over a child who would then have nowhere to go and would be under the total control of the man to whom he was "sold."

The circumstance for girls was even worse. They were forced into child prostitution.

Blake's poem "London" deals with these wrongs. He was also deeply concerned with how people treated animals. In "Auguries of Innocence" he states,

A Robin Red breast in a Cage
Puts all Heaven in a Rage.

Simply put, wild animals must not be caged.

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Arts

Rediscovering William Wordsworth

(1770-1850)

The World is Too Much With Us

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bears her bosom to the moon,
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers,
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

Ode: Intimations of Immortality From Recollections of Early Childhood

*The child is father of the man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety*

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,

To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore;—
Turn whereso'er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

2

The rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the rose;
The moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare;
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath passed away a glory from the earth.

3

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
And while the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound,
To me alone there came a thought of grief:
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong:
The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
I hear the echos through the mountains throng,
The winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
And all the earth is gay;
Land and sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every beast keep holiday;—
Thou child of joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy
shepherd-boy!

4

Ye blessed creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make; I see
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;
My heart is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal,

The fullness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.
O evil day! if I were sullen
While the earth herself is adoring,
This sweet May-morning,
And the children are culling
On every side,
In a thousand valleys far and wide,
Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,
And the babe leaps up on his mother's arm:—
I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!
—But there's a tree, of many, one,
A single field which I have looked upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone:
The pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat:
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

5

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing boy,
But he
Beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of the common day.

6

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind;
And, even with something of a mother's mind,
And no unworthy aim,
The homely nurse doth all she can

To make her foster-child, her inmate man,
Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.

7

Behold the child among his new-born blisses,
A six years' darling of a pigmy size!
See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
With light upon him from his father's eyes!
See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,
Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with a newly-learned art;
A wedding or a festival,
A mourning or a funeral;
And this hath now his heart,
And unto this he frames his song:
Then will he fit his tongue
To dialogues of business, love, or strife;
But it will not be long
Ere this be thrown aside,
And with new joy and pride
The little actor cons another part;
Filling from time to time his "humorous stage"
With all the persons, down to palsied age,
That life brings with her in her equipage;
As if his whole vocation
Were endless imitation.

8

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
Thy soul's immensity;
Thou best philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage, thou eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
Haunted forever by the eternal mind,—
Mighty prophet! Seer blest!
On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;
Thou, over whom thy immortality
Broods like the day, a master o'er a slave,
A presence which is not to be put by;
Thou little child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke

The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

9

O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!
The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benediction: not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest—
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast:—
Not for these I raise
The songs of thanks and praise;
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realized,
High instincts before which our mortal Nature
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised:
But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,
Are yet a master-light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal silence: truths that wake,
To perish never:
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
Nor man nor boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!
Hence in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

Then sing, ye birds, sing, sing a joyous song!
 And let the young lambs bound
 As to the tabor's sound!
 We in thought will join your throng,
 Ye that pipe and ye that play,
 Ye that through your hearts today
 Feel the gladness of the May!
 What though the radiance which was once so bright
 Be now forever taken from my sight,
 Though nothing can bring back the hour
 Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
 We will grieve not, rather find
 Strength in what remains behind;
 In the primal sympathy
 Which having been must ever be;
 In the soothing thoughts that spring
 Out of human suffering;
 In the faith that looks through death,
 In years that bring the philosophic mind.

And O ye fountains, meadows, hills, and groves,
 Forbode not any severing of our loves!
 Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
 I only have relinquished one delight
 To live beneath your more habitual sway.
 I love the brooks which down their channels fret,
 Even more than when I tripped lightly as they;
 The innocent brightness of a new-born day
 Is lovely yet;
 The clouds that gather round the setting sun
 Do take a sober colouring from an eye
 That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
 Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
 Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
 Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
 To me the meanest flower that blows can give
 Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

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Insights

Brief quotes, notions, inklings; inspirations, adages, aphorisms— either new or classic. We will post ours and yours! Send us your favorites.

- A man who lies to himself is often the first to take offense. - *Dostoevsky*
- History must be a manual for avoiding the mistakes of the past. - *President Barack Obama*
- Regretting the past cannot change the past. But remembering those regrets can change the future.
- *M H Perry*
- Never make someone a priority when all you are to them is an option. - *Maya Angelou*
- Hostility is contagious; you have to isolate it as though it's Ebola. - *M H Perry*
- The eye sees only what the mind is prepared to comprehend. - *Henri Bergson*
- Luck is where preparation meets opportunity. - *Seneca*
- It definitely feels better to give than to receive when the gift is advice. - *M H Perry*
- When you have got an elephant by the hind leg and he's trying to run away, it's best to let him run. - *Abraham Lincoln*
- We don't care what smart people think. There aren't that many of them. - *Scott Adams, "Dilbert"*
- People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. People who have lived on the public dollar most of their lives shouldn't support politicians who try to ruin the lives of those who legitimately need help. - *Word Worth*
- I view Jesus much the way I view Elvis. I love the guy, but some of the fan clubs terrify me. - *John Fugelsang*
- In a crisis, the best thing you can do is the right thing. The next best thing you can do is the wrong thing. The worst thing you can do is nothing at all. - *Theodore Roosevelt*
- One who does not recognize ills at their inception does not have true wisdom, and this is given to few. - *Niccolo Machiavelli*

- Freedom is the right to buy Skittles without getting shot. - *The Brady Network*
- The line between religion and superstition is microscopic, but it's mortally crucial to never cross it. - *M H Perry*
- Violence against women isn't cultural, it's criminal. - *Hillary Clinton*
- Almost anything, in time, can be forgiven, but there are a whole lot of things that should never be excused. - *Word Worth*

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