SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

Phantom

All look and likeness caught from earth,
All accident of kin and birth,
Had passed away. There was no trace
Of aught on that illumined face,
Upraised beneath the rifted stone
But of one spirit all her own—
She, she herself, and only she,
Shone through her body visibly.

Recollections of Love

1
How warm this woodland wild recess!
Love surely hath been breathing here;
And this sweet bed of heath, my dear!
Swells up, then sinks with faint caress,
As if to have you yet more near.

2
Eight springs have flown since last I lay
On seaward Quantock’s heathy hills,1
Where quiet sounds from hidden rills
Float here and there, like things astray,
And high o’erhead the sky-lark shrills.

1. A notebook that Coleridge kept in Malta in 1804 makes it clear that the poem describes the appearance of Sara Hutchinson in a dream.
2. Near Nether Stowey, Somerset, where Coleridge had lived from 1796 to 1798.
No voice as yet had made the air
Be music with your name; yet why
That asking look? that yearning sigh?
That sense of promise every where?
Belovèd! flew your spirit by?

As when a mother doth explore
The rose mark on her long-lost child,
I met, I loved you, maiden mild!
As whom I long had loved before—
So deeply had I been beguiled.

You stood before me like a thought,
A dream remembered in a dream.
But when those meek eyes first did seem
To tell me, Love within you wrought—
O Greta, dear domestic stream!

Has not, since then, Love’s prompture deep,
Has not Love’s whisper evermore
Been ceaseless, as thy gentle roar?
Sole voice, when other voices sleep,
Dear under-song in clamor’s hour.

Since all that beat about in Nature’s range,
Or veer or vanish, why should’st thou remain
The only constant in a world of change,
O yearning Thought! that liv’st but in the brain?
Call to the Hours, that in the distance play,
The faery people of the future day—
Recollections of Love

Fond Thought! not one of all that shining swarm
Will breathe on thee with life-enkindling breath,
Till when, like strangers shelt’ring from a storm,
Hope and Despair meet in the porch of Death!
Yet still thou haunt’st me; and though well I see,
She is not thou, and only thou art she,
Still, still as though some dear embodied Good,
Some living Love before my eyes there stood
With answering look a ready ear to lend,
I mourn to thee and say—“Ah! loveliest friend!
That this the meed of all my toils might be,
To have a home, an English home, and thee!”
Vain repetition! Home and Thou are one.
The peaceful’st cot the moon shall shine upon,
Lu kulled by the thrush and wakened by the lark,
Without thee were but a becalmèd bark,
Whose Helmsman on an ocean waste and wide
Sits mute and pale his moldering helm beside.

And art thou nothing? Such thou art, as when
The woodman winding westward up the glen
At wintry dawn, where o’er the sheep-track’s maze
The viewless snow-mist weaves a glist’ning haze,
Sees full before him, gliding without tread,
An image with a glory round its head;

The enamoured rustic worships its fair hues,
Nor knows he makes the shadow he pursues!

1828

1. Foolish.
2. Sara Hutchinson.
3. Reward.