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## Emotion Recollected in Tranquility

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# Emotion Recollected in Tranquility

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*Howard Schaap*

*“Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility.”*

—William Wordsworth

My son insists I nap with him winter afternoons,  
on the floor, next to the Christmas tree and perpendicular  
to the couch. We lie, a mirrored pair,  
our eyes closed to slits but not minds—  
or not his mind.

Unbeknownst to me  
as I drift into the dull screen of sleep  
and wait for the rash images of inchoate dreams,  
his mind reels with waking visions. He  
giggles, the rapid fire chirrup  
of a squirrel.

My eyes open to daylight  
but his remain closed tight,  
watching the screen of his mind.  
The squirrel chirrups again.

“What’s so funny?” I ask.  
“The puppy dressed up as Santa,” he says,  
eyes still closed to finish out the vision,  
then giggles a brook into our living room.

This is Wordsworth’s child, in vacant or in pensive mood;  
the scene that flashes on his inward eye—the bliss of solitude—  
is a cartoon: “Snoopy dressed up as Santa,” he giggles again  
and the stream bubbles out of our house and across the snow,  
thawing the bleak December, the heft of winter afternoons,

and my heart dances  
with the reckless abandon  
of Snoopy.