





The stationary blasts of waterfalls,  
 And every where along the hollow rent  
 Winds thwarting winds, bewilder'd and forlorn, 560  
 The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,  
 The rocks that mutter'd close upon our ears,  
 Black drizzling crags that spake by the way-side  
 As if a voice were in them, the sick sight  
 And giddy prospect of the raving stream, 565  
 The unfetter'd clouds, and region of the heavens,  
 Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light  
 Were all like workings of one mind, the features  
 Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,  
 Characters of the great Apocalyps, 570  
 The types and symbols of Eternity,  
 Of first and last, and midst, and without end.

William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805-6), VI, 551-72; text from Mark L. Reed (ed.), *The Thirteen-Book Prelude* (2 vols, Ithaca, N.Y., 1991), I, p. 190; lines 553-72 are also transcribed in Dorothy Wordsworth's *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland*, ed. Carol Kyron Walker (New Haven, 1997), pp. 154-5. As Reed comments, line 572 echoes *Paradise Lost*, V, 165, and the pitch of this climax recalls the Book of Revelation in the Authorised Version text; Hartman called this scene 'a visible pledge of immortality' (Geoffrey Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-1814* [New Haven, 1964], p. 109; see also pp. 42-69, 351-2), and Erskine-Hill describes it as holding a 'central position of prophecy' (Howard Erskine-Hill, *Poetry of Opposition and Revolution; Dryden to Wordsworth* [Oxford, 1996], p. 221). For circumstance and discussion see also Johnston, *The Hidden Wordsworth*, pp. 151-9; for social revolution as apocalyptic geology see John Wyatt, *Wordsworth and the Geologists* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 37 ff, 158 ff. For illuminating comparison with Shelley's 'Mont Blanc' (July 23, 1816) see also Martin Priestman, *Romantic Atheism; Poetry and Freethought, 1780-1830* (Cambridge, 1999), Chap. 7 (esp. pp. 232-5).

5.           Imagination! lifting up itself 525  
               Before the eye and progress of my Song  
               Like an unfather'd vapour; here that Power,  
               In all the might of its endowments, came  
               Athwart me; I was lost as in a cloud,  
               Halted without a struggle to break through, 530  
               And now recovering to my Soul I say  
               I recognize thy glory; in such strength  
               Of usurpation, in such visitings  
               Of awful promise, when the light of sense  
               Goes out in flashes that have shewn to us 535  
               The invisible world, doth Greatness make abode,  
               There harbours whether we be young or old.  
               Our destiny, our nature, and our home

Is with infinitude, and only there.

William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805-6), VI, 525-39; text from Mark L. Reed (ed.), *The Thirteen-Book Prelude* (2 vols, Ithaca, N.Y., 1991), I, pp. 189-90. The exclamation point after *Imagination*, ecstatic outcry of recognition and belated acknowledgement, is in later revisions smoothed away to a dash. 'strength of usurpation' reminds of *The Prelude* (1805-6), XIII, 51, as again a power challenging and displacing with new force an apparently stable order. The language of sudden visionary gleams and 'flashes' is by now deeply familiar; on the striking 'blue chasm' see an observant note in Jonathan Wordsworth (ed.), *The Prelude; The Four Texts (1798, 1799, 1805, 1850)* (London, 1995), pp. 656-7, and searching comment in Richard Bourke, *Romantic Discourse and Political Modernity; Wordsworth, The Intellectual and Cultural Critique* (Hemel Hempstead, 1993), pp. 253-5. Hartman's comment on this passage is in *Wordsworth's Poetry*, pp. 40-41. Also notable here is a familiar transit from first to third person utterance; the plural comprises an inclusive transcendence but not, it may be, a shared one.

For this idiom of prophetic rapture, and the care taken to separate its effect from those of popular enthusiasm, see Jon Mee, 'Wordsworth's Chastened Enthusiasm' in his *Romanticism, Enthusiasm and Regulation; Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period* (Oxford, 2003).

6. Oh! when I have hung  
 Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass,  
 And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock  
 But ill sustain'd, and almost, as it seem'd,  
 Suspended by the blast which blew amain,  
 Shouldering the naked crag; Oh! at that time  
 While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,  
 With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind  
 Blow through my ears! the sky seem'd not a sky  
 Of earth, and with what motion mov'd the clouds!

William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805-6), I, 342-351; text from Reed (ed.), *The Thirteen-Book Prelude*, I, p. 115. The passage is transferred unaltered except for minor detail from the two-part *Prelude* of 1798-9; see Stephen Parrish (ed.), *The Prelude, 1798-1799* (Ithaca, N.Y. and Hassocks, 1977), p. 44; see also p. 124 for earliest germs. This is a studied, mimetic ecphrasis, the hanging line-ends and postponing repeat figures all contrived to culminate in thematic exhaustion, so that at the end the positive features are drained into their absence, the vertigo of latent apocalypse. The sense of a tilted gravitation thus contrasts strongly with an equipoise in amazement, recaptured and recapitulated. The suspension may also be not merely rhetorical; Jonathan Wordsworth observes that the parish paid boys a bounty for destroying ravens, a threat to lambs, and here the boy was 'probably let down the rockface on a rope'; see his *The Prelude: the Four Texts (1798, 1799,*

*1805, 1850* (London, 1995), pp. 559-60.

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