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## WORDSWORTH AND THE POETRY OF POSTURE

BY SIMON SWIFT

I stay here, sitting, if I'm sitting, often I feel sitting, sometimes standing,  
it's one or the other, or lying down, there's another possibility, often I feel  
lying down, it's one of the three, or kneeling. What counts is to be in the  
world, the posture is immaterial, so long as one is on earth.

--Samuel Beckett, Texts for Nothing

“Oh is she prostrate, you mean?”--he had his categories in hand. “Why  
yes, she’s prostrate--just as Sally is. But they’re never so lively, you know,  
as when they’re prostrate.”

“Ah Sarah’s prostrate?” Strether vaguely murmured.

“It’s when they’re prostrate that they most sit up.”

--Henry James, The Ambassadors

In his 1914 essay “The Moses of Michelangelo,” Sigmund Freud offers what was a startlingly new interpretation of the gigantic eight-plus feet tall statue of Moses which is found in the church of San Pietro in Vincoli in Rome. Freud cites a venerable list of names, including both Jacob Burckhardt and Heinrich Wölfflin, who agree that Michelangelo portrayed Moses at a particularly dramatic crux in the story of Exodus: the moment when Moses’s anger “waxed hot” as the Israelites are discovered worshipping an idol (Exodus 32:19). Having cooled the waxing heat of God’s anger a few verses earlier on Sinai, as their idolatry was reported to him, Moses’s

own ire is raised by the sight, or maybe by the sound, of the idolatrous worship itself. The authors Freud cites understand Michelangelo to have situated Moses, who is portrayed seated, just before he takes action, at what Freud calls a “moment of hesitation, of calm before the storm.”<sup>1</sup> Moses is about to spring to his feet; his left foot is already raised at the heel, as if he were preparing to put pressure on the ball of the foot in order to hoist his powerful form upright. That form, for Burckhardt, “is animated by the inception of a mighty movement and the physical strength with which he is endowed causes us to await it with fear and trembling” (M, 216). Wölfflin’s interpretation of the posture of the statue as one of “inhibited movement” has Michelangelo depicting Moses, as Freud summarizes it, at “the last moment of self-control before he lets himself go and leaps to his feet” (M, 217). Moses has his head turned to the left, as if he looks over to the Israelite camp or has just caught the sound of the singing that Exodus records as he is resting, or so Freud surmises, on his way down Sinai. This moment of hesitation or delay precedes the sudden onrush of energy that, in two other readings of the statue that Freud cites, will cause the Tables of the Law pressed under Moses’s right arm to slip unnoticed to the ground and smash, as his enraged body suddenly rises up.

But Freud is unconvinced. Why, he asks, if Michelangelo had wished to represent this particular moment from the biblical narrative, would he have portrayed Moses as seated? The statue had been produced as part of an ambitious design for the tomb of Pope Julius II of two rows of six seated and standing figures, which were intended as what Henry Thode calls “types of human beings--as the vita activa and the vita contemplativa” (M, 219). Freud’s contention is that both this abstract humanist typology and the decision to represent Moses seated “excluded a representation of a particular historic episode” (M, 219). For Moses or any of the other figures to be represented “as about to take violent action” would disrupt the harmony of the whole by

permitting the illusion that each was about to “abandon its role in the general scheme” (M, 220). The figure of Moses, then, “cannot be supposed to be springing to his feet; he must be allowed to remain as he is in sublime repose” [er muß in hehrer Ruhe können] M, 220). What looks like stern anger in Moses’s countenance--as if the spectator, like the Israelites, were about to be chastised for bowing down to the kind of graven image that Moses himself also is--registers instead “an almost oppressively solemn calm” (M, 220).<sup>2</sup> Freud argues that Moses is not, in fact, portrayed at the moment of incipient rage that will quickly lead to the destruction of the Tables and the molten calf, but is caught overcoming that rage. Come to civilize the Israelites, Moses finds that it is his own rage that is in need of civilization. The drama of a moment’s hesitation before violent action found in Burckhardt and Wölfflin’s readings of the statue is stretched out, by Freud, into a permanent condition of frustration, which explains why Moses’s countenance looks less animated than they took it to be. “I was obliged,” Freud writes about his many encounters with the statue, “to realize that something was represented here that could stay without change; that this Moses would remain sitting like this in his wrath forever” (M, 220-21).

It is as if in Freud’s account the real, angered Moses has petrified into a passive-aggressive statue, while the kind of heroic fury that leads to an instant uprising and decisive intervention has instead faded into a primary gesture of civilization: the repression or restraining of passion that fills the elongated aftermath of a missed “historic episode” with cunning and strategy. By embodying stasis, and especially immobilization, Freud’s Moses leads the way into a condition of civilization in which we are all, in fact, seated statues:

What we see before us is not the inception of a violent action but the remains of a movement that has already taken place. In his first transport of fury, Moses desired to act, to spring up and take vengeance and forget

the Tables; but he has overcome the temptation, and he will now remain seated and still, in his frozen wrath and his pain mingled with contempt. (M, 229)

[T]he giant frame with his tremendous physical power becomes only a concrete expression of the highest mental achievement that is possible in a man, that of struggling successfully against an inward passion for the sake of a cause to which he has devoted himself. (M, 233).

Freud's reading of Moses's dejected posture suggests, then, that the repressive work of civilization keeps us eternally sitting down, rather than rising to the standing posture that meets the decisive historical event head-on.<sup>3</sup> Moses looks eternally ready to leap up or to spring into action, forever caught in a moment of hesitation or inhibition paradoxically brought on by the very force of the rage that seems to be about to overflow. But he will never stand up; at best, his posture can be construed as a sit-in protest against the idolatry whose staying power Moses has already conceded. Moses then denies himself the quick, almost automatic upwards spring of interruptive heroic action found in The Iliad, where "[t]he swift runner Achilles rose," or the heroic resistance of Abdiel in Paradise Lost, who "[s]tood up, and in a flame of zeal severe" opposed the current of Satan's fury.<sup>4</sup> Instead, he is left with the realization that others must be left to get on with indulging in the kinds of illusions that will ultimately inhibit them, even as that concession freezes him into another of the idols that they cherish.

When Achilles "rose" at the opening of The Iliad, it had in fact been to persuade the Achaeans to leave the shores of Troy since Apollo's rage seemed to be unswayable; but then he hesitated, sitting back down as the seer Calchas stood up to explain the cause of the divine fury to them. Hesitation, in the guise of the epic pause, puts new wind in the sails of heroic action.

Hamlet, a great hesitator himself, was fascinated by a scene of hesitation at the sacking of Troy: the moment of “Pyrrhus’s pause,” when Pyrrhus’s sword is held dramatically immobile over Priam’s head before suddenly plunging downward.<sup>5</sup> “So as a painted tyrant Pyrrhus stood,” recounts the player, “And, like a neutral to his will and matter, / Did nothing.”<sup>6</sup> When William Wordsworth began working on his translations of The Aeneid in 1823, he had Aeneas recall asking the shade of Hector, who had come to warn Aeneas of the imminent sacking of Troy, “why these lingerings of delay?”<sup>7</sup> Why are you still hanging around? Aeneas asks Hector, in a way that also hangs around, since lingering’s qualification of delay makes it quasi-tautologous. Pause, hesitation, and lingering in epic pile emphasis onto sudden uprisings, tipping points, and moments of transition or intervention that lie up ahead. But I want to suggest in this essay that Wordsworth’s poems work precisely to invert that relation. That is, they join Freud’s Michelangelo in invoking the prospect of catastrophic or spectacular change in order to cancel it by stretching out indefinitely the lingering hesitation by which it is traditionally foregrounded.

As Freud makes clear, the whole project for Julius II’s tomb, as well as the career of its eventual occupant, echo Moses’s failure. Like both Michelangelo and Moses, the Pope, Freud writes, “attempted to realize great and mighty ends, and especially designs on a grand scale” (M, 233). But where Michelangelo failed to bring together his mighty conception for a freestanding papal tomb to be housed in the new Saint Peter’s, Julius II failed to unite Italy under the Papacy.<sup>8</sup> If both of them join Moses in standing for a giant strength that adjusts itself to the necessity of making compromises with reality, they equally affirm the permanence of agitation and frustration that such bargains with the real entail. “The wise man, I affirm, can find no rest / In that which perishes,” writes Michelangelo in a sonnet translated by Wordsworth in 1805.<sup>9</sup>

Wordsworth shows a strong awareness, across his career, of the role of bodily posture in the reading (and oftentimes in the misreading) of antithetical possible meanings for human action and inaction. He repeatedly invokes differing and mirroring postures, almost as if the potential meanings of those postures were intended to cancel one another out. Both the 1798 and 1800 Lyrical Ballads open with a figure sitting on a stone: the wedding guest who “cannot chuse but hear” the tale of Coleridge’s *Ancient Mariner* and the William of “Expostulation and Reply.”<sup>10</sup> The first two poems of the 1800 collection play with the antithetical possible meanings of sitting as both a dreaming, sensory receptiveness to the natural world that risks the moral-philosophical accusation of idleness in the first poem, “Expostulation and Reply,” and a bending double over the endless strife of books that closes itself to natural wisdom and demands, in its turn, to be raised up in the second, “The Tables Turned.” If in the first poem rising up implicitly figures a formative process of enlightenment, and a growing commitment to ameliorative, benevolent activity that feels empowered to chastise “wise passiveness” as mere idleness, William’s turning of the tables in the second also lets it signify evidence of a heart that watches and receives rather than trying to change anything (W, 377). Like standing and sitting, lying on the ground--a posture which traditionally signifies pastoral ease and melancholy while moving, as I’ll hope to suggest in what follows, toward the possibility of protest--also accumulates antithetical meanings in Wordsworth. The opening of The Ruined Cottage (MS D), which in 1814 would open the ambitious project of The Excursion, finds a “dreaming man” (like Michelangelo’s Moses, possessed of a “sidelong glance”) who is imagined to extend “his careless limbs beside the root / Of some huge oak.”<sup>11</sup> The unobstructed ease of this imagined figure is conspicuously denied to the poem’s speaker, who is soon discovered giving up on his effort to make progress across the

exposed ground of a “bare wide common,” only to find “no rest,” he reports, as “I stretched myself / On the brown earth.”<sup>12</sup>

Restlessness, here as in Michelangelo’s sonnet, might be the first symptom of a collision between emphatic ambition and the real resistances of the world. Ambition might reach for the epic achievement of a Moses, a Julius II, or a Michelangelo (or indeed, of a poet who sets out with the hyperbolic aim to write a poem on “Man, on Nature, and on Human Life”), but ambition might also, as it seems to do in the “dreaming man” / Poet opposition, reach for an indefinite period of secure ease and topographical power--conditions of rest which the poem in fact makes unavailable.<sup>13</sup> Blockage, or at least perpetual delay, begin to appear through these examples in place of the ego ideals of total rest, epic rising, and the progress of enlightenment. According to Elaine Scarry, the image composed in our minds by the epic rising of Achilles in The Iliad is repeated in later writing, especially in what she calls the “vertical elongation” of Madame Bovary (1857) “when lying people sit up and sitting people stand, and standing people roll forward onto their toes or are raised by their sabots.”<sup>14</sup> But Scarry argues that the epic “stretching” of The Iliad is filled with a gravity conspicuously missing from the nineteenth-century novel of manners.<sup>15</sup> Positioned before that bathos, but also in a twilight of the epic, Romantic writing often seems to occupy a zone of blockage and atrophy. Just as often, it will celebrate acts of heroic intervention. But it also ironizes posturing heroism, as well as gestures of restraint that would figure an immobilized heroic strength like that of Moses.

Echoing through every emphatic Romantic call to “shake your chains to earth like dew” or to “Stand forth! Be men!” is the mild amusement taken by Jane Austen in a hyperbolic commitment to the moral law.<sup>16</sup> In Emma, such a commitment is found in Mr. Knightley’s description of Frank Churchill as someone who enjoys “all the advantages of sitting still when he



ought to move,” who can certainly “sit down and write a fine flourishing letter” but who, as he “became rational . . . ought to have roused himself and shaken off all that was unworthy” in the authority of his guardians.<sup>17</sup> Waking from the slumber of reason cannot but appear overblown here, but “restraint” is equally ripe for a send-up. It becomes a keyword, across her novel, for Austen’s heroine’s belief that her own capacities for social intervention are best expressed by her not exercising them--a belief that she nonetheless cannot hold to as her friends’ lives are changed by the micro-accelerations of plot that she sets in motion.

Anahid Nersessian has recently appealed to a “vocabulary of restraint,” which she finds encoded in the formal devices of Romantic poems, as a model for a more pragmatic political impulse than the left’s traditional “heroic posture of ‘demand’” might offer.<sup>18</sup> Such an emphatic posture, it hardly needs underlining, once shaped a whole generation of readings of Romantic poems, serving as it did to highlight that generation’s claims for the activism of the critical act, its Orphic rescue of blocked and occluded voices. The activist stance will read any “poetry of indifference” as deeply involved in the production of surplus value; thus Marjorie Levinson powerfully claimed that Armistead’s “failure to act” is just what transformed the ruined cottage “into a symbolic, indirect, generally available and readily commutable value.”<sup>19</sup> Limiting utopian demands for political change may, however, be a pragmatic way, Nersessian claims, to get more than we have but less than we hoped for. Yet I’m suggesting that Romantic poems may themselves, like Austen’s novel, already be invested in sending up restraint as well as sudden uprising. While heroic, emphatic, and revolutionary strength is often blocked in Romantic poems, the poems also critique restraint’s smuggling of power into a condition of agitated stasis. Between them, as I hope ultimately to show with reference to the lyrical ballad Nutting,

heroic action and restraint share the temporal spoils between full and missed time, while leaving nothing for a less animated horizontality, that is no less alert for being indefinitely suspended.

Freud's treatment of the statue of Moses implies, sure enough, that paralysis when faced with the expectation of epic intervention into the world issues in the mundanity of missed experience (where Moses remains forever seated), but that intervention in a crisis can only ever be imagined to happen in a state of emergency (since Moses's rising up would see him "forget" the Tables of Law pressed to his side that would then slip to the ground and smash). There is a relay here between the missed time of trauma and the full time of emergency, both of which shy away from any sense of the ordinary as itself a zone of intensity or concentration. Yet where once the dominant model for describing rich eventhood involved the shattering of the mundane, we increasingly think of the ordinary, a key zone for Wordsworthian poetry and poetics, with their focus on ordinary incident, as more than just a low resolution background onto which the sudden and spectacular event leaps up.<sup>20</sup> And if our current ordinary condition is itself caught up in global environmental and social processes of hyper-acceleration, then doing nothing no longer looks like the blurring into the background of a missed encounter or an act of repression, nor like the fanfare to epic action. It begins instead to take on the timbre of protest.<sup>21</sup>

Rather than thinking hesitation or delay as either a prelude to decisive action or a symptom of the latency of trauma, we might instead think of the indefinitely stretched-out horizontality of the real as shaping the time that remains around a political and ecological crisis that we are prone to imagine as lying up ahead, whatever the evidence that we are already living it. Catastrophe may be seen, paradoxically, to shelter lingering delay. What follows is, then, an effort to look at how Wordsworth's interest in posture is the record of a duration that is event-low and generally non-agitated, even as it sits alongside (and in the wake or expectation) of

forms of magnified experience or amplified ambition that enable that duration rather than continually shattering it. Such an approach, I hope also to show, sheds new light on current reading practices in their thinking of crises which cannot finally be distinguished from stillness and duration.

#### I. WORDSWORTH'S WEAK BEING

Since Geoffrey Hartman's seminal readings, Wordsworth's poetry has seemed to decline any power-share between security postures and violent intervention. Hartman read the basic rhythm of Wordsworth's poems in terms of a temporary interruption of forward motion, as involving especially an "initial halting, so quickly countervailed."<sup>22</sup> For Wordsworth, by Hartman's reading, the space of hesitation, lingering, or delay exists in relation to certain exaggerated ambitions or moments of shock that halting seems at once to anticipate, to succeed, and to undermine. The forward movement that quickly countervails halting, in Hartman's seminal reading of "The Solitary Reaper" in the opening chapter of Wordsworth's Poetry, mediates the "shock" which had caused the original halting, yet that mediation is itself "delayed for a considerable time."<sup>23</sup> Halting succeeded by delay, and the relation between blank pause and spectacular action or surprise (or, in a major key, "apocalypse") especially marked Hartman's Wordsworth with an effort to scope out forms of temporary comfort or reverence that might bridge the emphatic disruptions of temporality associated with traumatic experience.<sup>24</sup>

The plot of The Prelude, Hartman's main example of Wordsworth's disruption of temporal flow and scale of experience, pivots around how the decision to write an epic poem at once licenses and disturbs forms of lingering. It serves especially to place the experiences of blockage, "break through," and recovery alongside moments of halting that both offer "ease and

undisturbed delight” (W, 495) by allowing for rest in a prior resolution undertaken to write or to act (as at the opening of the poem’s 1805 version, where Wordsworth’s first act on setting forth on his epic journey is to lie on the ground), and that disrupt heroic ambition in ways that can be seen retrospectively to have “reconciled us to realities” (W, 534).<sup>25</sup> So often in Wordsworth’s poetry, hyperbolic ambition enters into relation with pause or interval. Yet rather than working as the drama of a period of latency that precedes sudden eruption, as in Freud’s official late account of civilization in Moses and Monotheism, I want to show here that for Wordsworth it is precisely hyperbolic or epic ambition and the shock associated with its lack of fulfillment that provides a cover for a primal source of interest: what he calls in the opening lines of The Prelude “infinite delay” (W, 497).<sup>26</sup>

While lingering might be cherished merely for its putting off of decision or action, for its enabling of what Henry James called “the majesty of delay,” its relation to magnified ambition makes of it a more concentrated experience than the simple staying of an event or decision.<sup>27</sup> Disturbance of epic ambition, as in The Prelude’s Simplon pass episode from which I quoted above, often figures its halting as a slackening of effort. In the opening of The Ruined Cottage, that slackening is also figured as a stretching out on the ground. It is as if in the latter poem a memory of the abandoned intention and effort of the restless speaker were somehow preserved in a supine posture whose stretching still carries something of concentration about it, in a way that seems to set the resting speaker off from the extended indolence and distracted gaze of the dreaming man. “Rest” (as Hartman wrote of the invitation “Nay, traveler, rest!” that opens Wordsworth’s contribution to the 1798 Lyrical Ballads), “is not mere idling but heightened attention”<sup>28</sup> Lily Gurton-Wachter has recently described the derivation of the word “attention” from the Latin tendere, to stretch, which almost makes it seem as if Hartman’s thought about rest

were that some condition of attention gives a diminished afterglow to the supine and stretched-out body's surrender of its upright effort and concentration.<sup>29</sup> Analyzing what she calls "postures of attention"--forms of expectation and watchfulness which cut between poetics and the fearful anticipations of invasion that haunted an increasingly militarized public sphere in the England of the 1790s--Gurton-Wachter subtly describes Wordsworth's poetry's capacity to take seriously "the impossibility of a sustained state of attention."<sup>30</sup> In place of the canonical critique of the distractions of an urbanized modernity, however, the low-level stretch receives here a positive valorization.

If it is in the Preface to Lyrical Ballads that the Wordsworthian critique of distraction finds its locus classicus, attention to posture in the opening poems of both the first and second editions suggests that such a moralizing critique may be at risk of condemning richer, because less hyper-stimulated, forms of indifference. Getting the wedding guest sat down on a stone, his attention fully captured means that Coleridge's Mariner "hath his will."<sup>31</sup> But will is precisely a matter of indifference to the claim of William in "Expostulation and Reply" about forms of pleasure which are said to pass through the supine body "against, or with our will" (W, 377). As Gurton-Wachter points out, for Walter Benjamin, the later Romantic lyric of Charles Baudelaire appeals to distracted readers for whom "will power and the ability to concentrate are not their strong points," but Wordsworth's are poems that pointedly set a bodily indifference to will against distraction.<sup>32</sup> In doing so, they seem more consonant with Benjamin's own, and after him Giorgio Agamben's recent effort to think questions including use and justice outside of "the will of a subject."<sup>33</sup> And the prone body might point towards a form of subjectivity divested of will, since Aristotle's foundational term for philosophical subjecthood, hypokeimenon, as Agamben points out, itself means "that which . . . lies under" (derived from the Greek verb keimai, "I

lie”).<sup>34</sup> This derivation marks Agamben’s own effort in The Use of Bodies to think a subjectivity that refuses oppositions between action and passivity, \*act and potentiality. Bodily posture in “Expostulation and Reply” and elsewhere, then, figures an indifference of attention strongly marked by its oppositional relation to the long history of the word and concept subject as a site of forceful, upright intentionality or standing forth, yielding a quiet opposition which refuses to be written off as mere inaction or mindless hyper-stimulation, even as it cannot quite be finally contained in ideas of concentration.

The posture of perhaps Wordsworth’s most distracted interlocutor, his discharged soldier discovered propped against a milestone “half sitting and half standing” opens awkward questions about how a loitering indifference to one’s own interest that looks ripe for admonishment sits alongside an equally indifferent expectation of grace, charity or support from the world.<sup>35</sup> Both present as the slackening of a drilled uprightness which has become unemployed and negative, that leans and is discharged. But neither feels like idleness, even as it is in the shape of a challenge to idle or empty time that the question of what to do with the soldier emerges. A giant like Michelangelo’s Moses (being “in stature tall/ A foot above man’s common measure tall”) leaning in place of standing to “attention” like Gurton-Wachter’s watchful, alarmed poets and soldiers, this soldier nevertheless reports that his rest had made him “at ease and much relieved.”<sup>36</sup> It is as if he were beyond an economy of need, even as his mere presence cannot but appeal to a social imperative to tidy away the problem that he presents by putting him back into one. The speaker’s insistence on providing greater comfort to the soldier than the open road can afford hardly seems to run against his needs, but as the soldier rises from his temporary resting place it’s equally hard not to rail against the disturbance of that ease in the name of what turns out after all to be an only slightly more prolonged and sheltered moment of rest. The encounter

feels finely poised: in a charitable act where the coercive demand that comfort be administered to the sufferer can do no more than move the soldier onto yet another temporary resting place, the giver of comfort comes away with an awkwardly heightened quantity of ease of his own. At the same time, and however tactless and politically awkward it may seem, the soldier's original slackness may already have traced a path through which what Gurton-Wachter calls a "condition of perceiving anything other than that which one already expects" might otherwise have been able to appear.<sup>37</sup>

It is not so much that the speaker should have done more or better for the discharged soldier, as that his disturbing him in order to put him to rest reveals the coerciveness embedded in the administering of consolation by thought and deed. Perhaps, in fact, it is this basic drive toward consolation that gives thought its weird halo of activism. "One doesn't have to minister to the afflicted" writes Paul North, after Simone Weil; "before any such practical activity one merely gives one's attention to them."<sup>38</sup> Even distraction becomes comforting, according to North, when thinking puts it in its place by recognizing its triviality. If contemplation seeks to "draw the thinking being away from a situation that cannot be resolved through acts," then Kafka, in North's stunning account of his Zürau aphorisms, seeks to offer a mode of thinking that, without fetishizing suffering, keeps to that situation while also remaining inconsolable.<sup>39</sup> Attention is then quite the opposite of abandonment, even while it always doesn't seek out grounds on which to act. In place of the coerciveness embedded into the idea of comfort (whereby you must be comforted by consolation: think of the way that Armytage both takes comfort out of Margaret's mouth in The Ruined Cottage and also insists on her, and in fact everyone's, being consoled for suffering which is at the limit of the bearable), I want instead to investigate a less comfortable territory. In that territory, lingering, standing, sitting, and lying

open up a seating area where, as in the transitional space of object-relations psychoanalysis, paradox can be embraced and frustration tolerated. This is a space where shelter and destruction coincide, where the difference between sitting and standing becomes inconsequential, and where restraint becomes indistinguishable from lack of attention in the face of palpable urgency.

The poet-figure's blocked rest at the opening of The Ruined Cottage appears to be cleared a few lines further on by the discovery of yet another figure of unemployment, the retired Armytage "stretched upon the cottage bench."<sup>40</sup> But this stretched ease is itself quickly disrupted by the continual act of rising that this poem seems to want to associate with the irruptive force of grief that lingers around the dead Margaret's history. After the speaker "rose" from his rest, "He [Armytage] rose" from the bench some thirty lines later, and Margaret too "rose from off her seat" early in "Part 2" of the poem, having just been described "sitting down upon a chair" as she "wept bitterly."<sup>41</sup> Finally, the poem's inconsequential risings are quickly dispatched in the way that Armytage's decisive turn away from Margaret's history ("The old man rose and hoisted up his load") echoes the jarring shift in narrative perspective at the end of John Milton's Lycidas ("At last he rose, and twitch'd his mantle blue; / To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.")<sup>42</sup> In both poems, the potential open-endedness of elegy is awkwardly and abruptly closed down by mapping mourning onto the pastoral unit of the solar day, as if to stop grieving were as timely and orderly an event as the setting of the sun ("And now the sun had stretch'd out all the hills, / And now was dropp'd into the western bay").<sup>43</sup>

Such echoes suggest a wider literary and historical pattern of discomfort with the gesture of rising and turning, whether decisively toward or away from a situation of crisis or a scene of mourning, as if leaning in were all that we might actually do. While sitting down on a "bench of desolation," like Armytage or like a character in the late Henry James story of that name, may



seem to figure (albeit somewhat theatrically) despairing surrender, all that rising appears to be able to do is to make visible an opposition between Margaret's lingering, despairing hope and Armytage's sudden cut in her narrative--a narrative that it feels difficult, even inhumane, to close.<sup>44</sup> While lingering, as I'll show in a moment, arguably provides the deep time for Hartman's stunning account of "humanization" in Wordsworth, it also shows the Wordsworthian lyric to be caught in an ecological temporality of crisis.<sup>45</sup> The lyric, by this reading, finds itself situated between the hesitant interval of the "little while longer," brilliantly described by Anne-Lise François, that may still remain to us, and the left's crisis-oriented, weakened, and yet achingly powerful hope beyond hope that "even now, / Ev'n now," in the darkest last second of the last day, things could change.<sup>46</sup>

"Even now" is a phrase that resonates through poems of temporal crisis in Wordsworth's period. The way in which a supine Coleridge in Fears in Solitude imagines the "crash of onset" of a French invasion to echo across the stilled dell in which he takes up his security posture, "even now, / Ev'n now," may appear to cut against the thought of a progressive political temporality of the last chance held out in a rapidly diminishing present.<sup>47</sup> But Fears in Solitude is also marked by a sense of the anticipated war of French aggression as a continuation by other means, as well as a hoped-for undoing, of an already existing relation between war and immorality, as if terror and redemption, past and future, could no longer be held apart. "Even now" is almost at the level of a trope in the Coleridge of Fears in Solitude and related topographical verse such as Charlotte Smith's Beachy Head (1807), where, alongside other markers of the present and forms of what Susan Stewart calls "the deictic now," it seems emblematic of the shock experienced by a liberal historical imagination that such things are still going on or are imaginable in prospect.<sup>48</sup> But this liberal temporality of the "even now" also

sounds out a sense of redemption that happens in the shadow of that shock. For Benjamin, spotting the lie in arguments for the exceptionality of National Socialism, the current amazement that the things which we are experiencing “are ‘still’ possible . . . is not philosophical,” unless it were taken to undermine the progressive view of history that made such amazement possible in the first place.<sup>49</sup> Any such counter-progressive thinking would happen, for Benjamin, in the name of the oppressed, the supine, who a progressive history leaves “lying prostrate” as the rulers step over them.<sup>50</sup>

As much as the postures of the uncertain interval I am exploring here might seem to resonate with Benjamin’s “weak Messianic power,” they find their alignment with certain contemporary ontologies of weakness that bespeak Romanticism’s own weak being out of their reappraisal of the hermeneutics of reading.<sup>51</sup> Among those contemporary forms of left melancholy, one might gesture to what Christopher Nealon, in a recent essay on “Camp Messianism,” calls “the rueful astonishment that, against all odds,” the prediction of Benjamin’s generation about the coming liquidation of all social relations “is still not complete. If post-Cold War global economic volatility has not resulted in wholesale disaster for the United States or Europe,” Nealon continues, then “late-late capitalism gives texture to our everyday lives more murmuringly.”<sup>52</sup> Benjamin takes shock that National Socialism’s allegedly regressive tendencies are still possible to be a symptom of a lingering attachment to the ideology of progress, and as therefore definitely not philosophical. In place of this shock, more recent astonishment that an anticipated catastrophe hasn’t quite (at least yet) happened bears witness to a more low-fi murmur. Yet this kind of awareness of the temporality of the present, I want to underline again, finds its earliest modern avatars in the politics of the Romantic encounter with the artwork: that word “still” in Benjamin’s and Nealon’s accounts inevitably recalls to the Romanticist’s ear the

“still unravished bride of quietness,” John Keats’s Grecian Urn that, like Michelangelo’s Moses, is held in eternal suspense and implicit bodily immobility though, and just because, it is portrayed as forever winning near the goal.<sup>53</sup>

Romantic poetry might therefore seem to lean into the conditions of stasis, inertia, and suspension that it finds in its choice objects of ekphrastic delight. Wordsworth’s final opting for the “weak being of the past” over revolutionary abstraction in The Prelude (1805), or the glorious camp of Keats’s own suspension before the Elgin Marbles--“[l]ike a sick Eagle looking at the sky,” declaring “[m]y spirit is too weak”--might form notable exhibits in any gallery of Romantic weakness.<sup>54</sup> This shared tendency toward weakness led critics of various stripes to align Romanticism with quietism. As Carmen Mathes has recently shown, the long association of Keatsian suspension and negative capability with a quietist reading of Wordsworth’s “wise passiveness” goes back to Walter Jackson Bate, but in quite an extraordinary way, it was also “either maintained or overlooked” by later politically revisionary readers of Keats.<sup>55</sup> Those who wanted to amp up the political claims of their poetic subject did not, one must presume, have an eye toward the politics of passivity, looking instead for occluded forms of activism. The charge of passivity left Wordsworth open to the accusation that his poetry “elides action,” as Alan Liu argued of The Ruined Cottage, and in the case of that poem favors picturesque repose over baroque narrative in ways that made \*Armistead’s insistence on reading the “forms of things” an anticipation of the very New Critical habits which seemed to license the association of readerly passivity with social inaction.<sup>56</sup> But a growing body of recent criticism describes instead how states of repose and bodily or mental suspension in Romantic poetry were actually understood as demanding forms of attention.<sup>57</sup> Meanwhile, Rei Terada has shown something of how the startling tendency to cultivate ephemeral and quasi-hallucinatory visual experience, often in a

reclined posture, from Coleridge to German idealist philosophy and critical theory might signify a refusal of assent to that coercive premise of phenomenological experience, the given.<sup>58</sup> Again, the sense here would be that what looks distracted or idle might otherwise be understood as a form of resistance. Perhaps the “weak being” of Wordsworthian and Keatsian attention might also be seen to anticipate Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s late study of “weak theory” which, while it seems to do little more than to describe objects, nevertheless takes the risk of an affective opening to forms of surprise that strong, predetermined and hermeneutically-suspicious modes of reading can be seen, from this weakened posture, precisely to guard themselves against.<sup>59</sup> I will return to this relation of weakness to strength in what follows via Wordsworth’s great poem of watchful, standing suspiciousness about vulnerability to harm, “The Two April Mornings,” and Keats’s intriguing response to it.

Wordsworth’s turn to the weak being of the past sought to escape the hermeneutics of revolutionary suspicion of his own day, and certainly the approach developed here follows this seam, is “weak” in its aim to dissociate the critical act from a predetermining suspiciousness and a will to dissection. But what I hope to offer in the remainder of this essay is a phenomenology of the cultural and political meanings of posture that gives a view not only of the relation between the supine posture and the interval it seems inevitably to wrap around itself, but that also seeks to embody the different kind of reading, matching a weakened estimate of the possible outcomes of action with a strengthened capacity for attention, that such an approach makes possible.

Milton, as we’ve long known, was the strong poet of any Wordsworthian weakness. Yet Lycidas, in Hartman’s reading of Wordsworth, already stalled, for a little while, the narrative time of grief. Milton, as Hartman read him, interposed a little ease in order to let “our frail

thoughts dally with false surmise,” allowing human weakness to linger temporarily around a comforting pastoral fantasy of nature’s capacity to grieve with humans, before acceding to the higher, stronger, and yet colder act of moving on demanded by Christian consolation.<sup>60</sup> Yet Milton’s moment of tolerance for frail human thinking becomes instead a semi-permanent condition in Hartman’s Wordsworth. The distinction between the little while of the surmise-fantasy, understood as a moment of temporary reprieve taken in a comforting pastoral error, and the permanence of a higher theological truth is annulled, such that all that’s left is a choice of forms of surmise; the poet, writes Hartman, “has nothing else to dally with.”<sup>61</sup> In an age of secularization, we might say, the higher truth can no longer be depended upon to license its own temporary staying. So, in Hartman’s reading of Wordsworth, endless lingering or dallying is the primary symptom of a fear. The erroneous surmise that the universe responds to a human call is to be abandoned, not in favor of the higher truth of Christian promise, but of an entirely disenchanted, and therefore putatively human theme. But such an abandonment might, Hartman argues, also result in the loss of poetry tout court. How to fully humanize poetry, to divest it of any relation to the supernatural, whether derived from pastoral romance or Christian theology, and yet to allow it to remain poetry?

Anticipating Colin Jager’s more recent claim that “a lingering belief in the enchanted world is not the binary opposite of modernity but its dialectical other,” Hartman’s Wordsworth ends up caught in a stuttering process of “humanization,” on the never-ending path to a fully-disenchanted anthropology.<sup>62</sup> Yet not being able to move on may be a sign of enrichment, not (or even as well as) stuckness. Hartman’s influential reading of Nutting staged it as an “emblem” for this suspended process of humanization, a warning about the risks incurred by a sudden and violent break with the past.<sup>63</sup> Nutting dramatizes the relation between lingering and sudden

transformation in its mock-heroic narrative of quest, sudden discovery of an intact hazel grove, a luxuriating in the prize, and then an equally sudden transition to a mode of attack. This slow-sudden-slow-sudden rhythm is narrated through shifting postures in the speaker's body, from standing to sitting to lying. So too, these postures of lingering and movement are delivered in the dallying form of surmise.<sup>64</sup> If Wordsworth's poems often cherish the blank interval of lingering or hesitation, Nutting rises and intervenes while becoming oddly self-conscious about the rhythm of drawn-out delay followed by sudden uprising that Wordsworth elsewhere seems to undermine. Both lingering and intervention get tangled up in questions of restraint, figured first as a heightening of pleasure through reining it in (the poem's "wise restraint / Voluptuous") and then as a retrospective chastisement of the pleasure taken in destructive action (the final address to the "dearest maiden") (W, 147). The way in which restraint orchestrates odd modes of temporal flow in this poem also speaks to the questions about poetic form raised by Nersessian. Acting and not acting both finally give dubious forms of pleasure, while pleasure gets connected to harm. The rest of this essay is oriented toward Nutting and the ecological questions that it opens about the human power to act or forego, via a short history of poetical, philosophical, and political accounts of posture, rest, delay, and strength.

## II. FROM STANDING TO LYING

Douglas J. Kneale writes of Nutting that it is "precisely a character of suspense or hesitation, one that is, for a moment, almost 'stupidly good' that defines the poise of a text that is nearly all forepleasure and afterglow."<sup>65</sup> For Milton's Satan, who "abstracted stood," rendered "stupidly good" at the sight of Eve, standing traverses the space between activity and passivity since it registers as both forceful resistance and hesitation.<sup>66</sup> The long editorial controversy over

whether to read the moment in Paradise Lost when “Into this wild Abyss the wary Fiend/ Stood on the brink of hell and look’d awhile” as casting Satan’s standing as an action “into” even in its lingering withdrawal already suggests standing’s blurring of the boundary between decisive action and wary hesitancy.<sup>67</sup> In Paradise Regained, standing develop the antithetical meanings that Freud associates with “primal words.” Jesus takes a stand against Satan’s effort to tempt him into performing the miracle of standing on the pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem: “There stand, if thou wilt stand; to stand upright / Will ask thee skill,” goads Satan;

To whom thus Jesus: Also it is written,

Tempt not the Lord thy God, he said, and stood:

But Satan smitten with amazement fell.<sup>68</sup>

Standing is freighted with both revolutionary power and the cadences of inertia. For Rebecca Comay, the verb “to stand” “pivots on the grammatical tension between its stative and its dynamic usage, between the condition of standing and the act of standing up, between situation and event.”<sup>69</sup> If the condition of standing, and the whole lexis of stature, imply the steadfastness and constancy that are meant to follow on the raising of a statue or the founding of a state or institution, the act of standing up, of overcoming inertia, appears more for Comay in the region of “that which insists, takes a stand, stands apart or against, stands up to or rises up against the existing state of affairs.”<sup>70</sup> Forcing us to reconsider the opposition between motion and rest, and the constitutional relation between the executive and legislative arms, Comay claims that attention to standing and stasis reveals peculiar states of hyperactive blockage and atrophy. In a civil war, for example, political hardening “exposes the rigid armature sustaining the status quo,” and leads to forms of explosiveness and agitation, which can themselves become immobilizing.<sup>71</sup> Ambiguous relations between stasis and motion, agitation and freezing, just are, by this

argument, the life of political existence (“existence,” as Comay points out, itself derives from histemi, the same Latin root for stare, sistere, to step out into being, to stand forth, to exist).<sup>72</sup> Yet if the tonal ambiguity in standing makes prospects for change look bleak, it also implies that it is only by attending to the experience of stuckness--both the status quo of the standing condition and the atrophy that, depressingly, seems so often to follow the act of taking a stand--that history sheds its veneer of second nature.

If epic stands, elegy struggles to get (back) on its own two feet. In his essay “Inscriptions and Romantic Nature Poetry,” Hartman described what he understood to be Wordsworth’s effort to transform the classical, epigrammatic form of the wayside nature inscription, the source of elegy, whose role it was to “guide the stranger to suitable watering or resting places” (including graves) into “a free-standing poem.”<sup>73</sup> Unlike M. H. Abrams’s freestanding new critical poem, but like the statue of Moses, traditional inscription poetry is defined by its lack of autonomy; it is, as Hartman describes it, “a dependent form of poetry, in the same sense in which the statues of churches are dependent on their architectural setting or partly conceived in function of it.”<sup>74</sup> By Hartman’s account, Wordsworth’s efforts to give the inscription of place an autonomous, cosmopolitan meaning were undone by the “restrictive and reactionary rather than liberative and revolutionary” measures of post-Romantic lyric verse.<sup>75</sup> But what Keats understood to be Wordsworth’s tendency to impose design and self-justification onto the reader had already undermined, for Hartman, this bid for lyric autonomy.

In the lyrical ballad “The Two April Mornings,” an example of “palpable design” for both Hartman and Keats, standing aligns itself with a speaker’s resistance to the threat that an earlier exposure to grief might be repeated.<sup>76</sup> In the last stanza of the poem, Matthew is called up again from his grave



Matthew is in his grave, yet now,  
Methinks, I see him stand,  
As at that moment, with a bough  
Of wilding in his hand.

(W 381)

Matthew has just been overseen recalling a “blooming Girl” met on the first April morning of the poem’s title, though he had not wished her his since she reminded him of his dead daughter (W, 381). The fact that Matthew’s grief somehow thinks that it requires the spectacle of its successful resistance to the threat of another potential object of love in fact proves that Matthew’s life has already been altered immeasurably, in ways that make his demonstrativeness finally redundant. A recalcitrant standing cannot know the way in which it encrypts just the vulnerability it seeks to stand against.

The “wordsworthian, egotistical sublime,” as Keats wrote in his letter to Richard Woodhouse on 27 October 1818, “is a thing per se and stands alone.”<sup>77</sup> Why, Keats asks J. H. Reynolds in a letter in February of the same year, should we be “with Wordsworths ‘Matthew with a bough of wilding in his hand’ when we can have ‘Jacques under an oak’ etc?”<sup>78</sup> The contrast suggests a significant postural meaning. Jaques is discovered in the second act of William Shakespeare’s As You Like It overcome by uncontrollable weeping “as he lay along / Under an oak,” to which place

a poor sequestered stag  
That from the hunter’s aim had ta’en hurt  
Did come to languish.<sup>79</sup>

As well as being a stock figure of early modern melancholy, his lying along makes of Jaques, in contradistinction to the standing resistance of Matthew, an example of the redolently Keatsian figure of the chameleon. “Chameleon” derives from the Homeric Greek noun *keimelion* (Κειμήλιου), which itself derives, according to Anne Carson, from the verb *keimein*, “I lie,” giving *keimelion* the same root as *hypokeimenon*, the Aristotelian term for subject. Carson glosses the meaning of this verb as “to be situated, to lie there and do nothing.”<sup>80</sup> Used by Homer in the *Odyssey* to refer to forms of wealth held in reserve and ready to be exchanged in an aristocratic gift economy, such as metallic treasures, cloth, and women, the noun *keimelion* is, according to Carson, “something to be laid away or treasured up . . . something that its owner does not need to use for survival.”<sup>81</sup>

In a stunning reading of Jean-Luc Godard’s 1963 film *Le Mépris*, Carson invokes the figure of *keimelion* to describe the potential for resistance of just lying there that comes from withholding what also seems to be disclosed. Her example is the spectacle of Bridget Bardot’s prone, belly-down, naked body in the movie’s much-parodied opening scene. That scene was added under pressure from Joe Levine, the film’s American producer, who wanted to see a healthy return on the five million francs he’d invested in the form of a nude Bardot. The scene is of Bardot asking her husband if he likes each part of her anatomy in turn. For Carson, Godard at once enacts a compromise with the profit imperative, since we get to see some of Bardot’s body, while offering a mild resistance to that same demand through the economy of exorbitance figured by Bardot’s *keimelion*, a treasure that just lies there, at once withholding and revealing itself.

### III. HYPERBOLE AND THE POLITICS OF STUPOR

Rather than tracking a narrative whereby the invitations of epic ambition, lyrical attention, or political resistance are simply declined, I want to move toward a reading of Nutting by teasing out the importance of a hyperbolic mode of sudden or resolved uprising or standing that allows the Romantic lyric to clear a space for a politics of stupor or inaction. An influential way of reading the Romantic and post-Romantic lyric, reaching back to Wordsworth and also key to Hartman's reading of him, takes hyperbole to enable the amping-up of things that otherwise might appear mean or insignificant to a condition of epic grandeur: the depth of thought found in the Immortality Ode's "meanest flower that blows" being the locus classicus for that move (W, 462). Following Baudelaire, Jonathan Culler has recently described hyperbole in just this way, as "a fundamental characteristic of the lyric" that shows how "apparently trivial observations are of considerable significance."<sup>82</sup> But lyric hyperbole might also be seen to cut the other way, such that hyperbolic and posturing claims exist precisely in order to enable a resistant blankness.

Citing Theodor Adorno's exaggerated claim that "nothing is true in psychoanalysis except the exaggerations," Comay claims in Mourning Sickness that "[e]xaggeration reveals uncomfortable features of experience that would otherwise remain invisible."<sup>83</sup> It is "by making things coarser," she writes, that Freud "forces us to linger on what otherwise might escape our attention" (MS, 96). If G. W. F. Hegel's critique of Immanuel Kant has been rightly castigated as crude, this is because, Comay argues, it is meant to be "particularly bombastic" (MS, 95). Where Freud turns to the pathological in order to offer a slow-motion illumination of the normal, Hegel highlights the pathological element within the normative claims of Kant's system. Accounts of experience such as Kant's, which \*[altered to singular to preserve consistency] make experience look like an objet trouvé are instead revealed, by Hegel's motivated use of hyperbole and

exaggeration, to be made things, artifices. The Wordsworthian lyric, too, has been accused of mental bombast, of depending on what Hartman describes as the “self-generating strength of a hyperbolic language movement,” found especially in passages such as the “best philosopher” stanza of the Immortality Ode, so troubling to Coleridge in its conspicuous excess.<sup>84</sup> Where Hegel’s exaggeration illuminates the coercive normativity in Kant’s claims for experience, thereby telling us more, through Kant’s excesses, about what experience is really like, hyperbole in Wordsworth might be similarly understood to clear a space for the blank or mean that can only become manifest under the shadow of hyperbole. What we end up with is not so much coercive design as rest sheltered by the deliberate bombast of hyperbolic claims for design. In other words, the way in which Wordsworth in the Ode uses the idea of preexistence in Platonic philosophy as an Archimedean point, a “point whereon to rest,” is enabled by the poem’s adjacent amping-up of the philosophical pretensions of poetic language and childhood experience.<sup>85</sup>

This might be seen more clearly in the way that it plays out in Hartman’s own reading practice. His point of reference for the motivated uses of exaggeration is not Adorno, Freud, or Hegel, but Martin Heidegger. In the essay from which I quoted above, “Wordsworth Before Heidegger,” Hartman cites two sentences from the same page of Heidegger’s An Introduction to Metaphysics, one a typically bold question about whether Being might become the “destiny of the West,” which Heidegger says “is anything but an exaggeration and a rhetorical figure,” and his much more modest claim that in asking this question “[w]e are merely holding fast, establishing something which has not yet been thought through, for which we still have no locus.”<sup>86</sup> Hartman intuitively grasps the importance of such tonally different phrases to lie in their relation: a relation between what he takes, despite Heidegger’s disclaimer, to be the “stupefying” rhetoric of

the phrase “destiny of the West” and what he calls the “understated” claim about holding fast.<sup>87</sup>

Hartman says that the German for holding fast, fest-sellen, “alludes to a whole range of discriminated interactive synonyms that refer to place, standing, understanding (Verstehen).”<sup>88</sup>

Stupefying indeed; hyperbole is just what allows the arrest of standing fast in a stupor.

Hyperbole is freighted with a political-revolutionary as well as a poetical-philosophical burden, and accounts of what was happening to an urbanizing and revolution-fixated society at the turn of the nineteenth century by Wordsworth and others reveal the oddly familiar rhythm between the sudden and delay, and between agitation and inertia. Where Burckhardt reads the inception of a “mighty movement” in the taut frame of Michelangelo’s Moses, Hegel’s reading of the French Revolution, in Comay’s account, emphasizes the “power of interruption” (MS, 77). That power is an embodiment of abstract negativity, which forces the idea of right to break into history “all at once” [mit einem Male] in order to smash its congealed status as second nature (MS, 77). The sudden and unconditional appearance of this power in the Revolution--its “instantaneous and total visibility (MS, 77),” or what Jager calls, discussing Scott’s Rob Roy, “the shock of everything happening ‘at once’”--helps to account for why Hegel, famously, commits to an all-or-nothing model of the Revolution, refusing to siphon off the Terror in a Kantian, spectatorial logic that keeps the Revolution’s world-historical significance separate from its barbaric violence.<sup>89</sup> The revolution’s meaning, for Hegel, can’t be separated from its sudden, overwhelming display of power. But Hegel’s refusal of a safe space of spectatorship also links revolutionary action to a symptomatic restlessness in consciousness, and once again blocks the decisive rising that offers the revolutionary act its self-understanding. “Condemned to strike postures it cannot sustain,” writes Comay, “to measure itself against standards to which it cannot adhere and that do not themselves cohere, consciousness is inherently torn or ‘twofold’--

doubtful, desperate, and despairing” (MS, 84). But if consciousness finds itself unable to live up to its own ideal of intervention, neither can it fall back into any simple condition of inertia. As Hegel writes in the Phenomenology, it “can find no peace. If it wishes to remain in a state of unthinking inertia [Trägheit], then thought troubles its thoughtlessness, and its own unrest disturbs its inertia” (quoted in MS, 85).

Holding a posture, as Maximilien Robespierre and others found in their efforts to reproduce ideals and poses associated with classical republican virtue, can get tiring, but dropping the pose only leads to more agitation. Hegel’s reading of the Revolution, as Comay shows, ultimately emphasizes conditions of flatness and mundanity as the outcome of revolutionary excitement, most prominently figured by that prone icon of revolutionary violence, “the flat death on the scaffold” (MS, 80). In the Preface to Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth points toward a disturbing proximity in city life between “a thirst after outrageous stimulation” and a mental life of “savage torpor,” as if the boring and the spectacular, the inert and the agitated, had in fact become the same thing (W, 735).<sup>90</sup> “Any emotion is embarrassing; mere excitement is preferable,” declare Adorno and Max Horkheimer in Dialectic of Enlightenment, but that excitement is also tied, for them, to the death drive and petrification.<sup>91</sup> The weirdly busy inertia of the new form of life in the city captured in Wordsworth’s preface, or what he calls in a letter of 1791 the “strenua inertia” of London’s vortex, is meant to be regulated through the management of human passion by poetic meter, which intends to excite in a more even way than the sensorium of the city ever can.<sup>92</sup> But as a number of recent readers have noted, the regulation or restraining of passion by meter runs against a sense in which meter is itself passion or affectivity rather than a rule imposed onto it. In an 1804 letter to John Thelwall, which has been the subject of much recent commentary, Wordsworth draws attention to the passion of meter as a

way of distinguishing between poetry and prose, a difference felt especially at the ends of poetic lines, which he says cannot be pronounced with “the same indifference” as other parts of lines.<sup>93</sup> The difference made by a line ending, the sense of it as a natural resting place for emphasis, runs against techniques of enjambment and caesura, especially in blank verse, which enable the interval to be overrun, as if, to cite a famous example, the suspension of the Winander Boy’s “hung / listening” were only really a suspension or hanging to the extent that it implies continuity of attention into the next, qualifying line (W, 145). While this stretching out allows the line’s shock of mild surprise to become gentle, the play between enjambment and an early pause in the poem’s succeeding line at once stays and permits sudden forward motion, as in the “leaping and lingering” of ballad meter.<sup>94</sup>

#### IV. NUTTING’S HESITATION

The metrical relation between restraint and pleasure, and the stretching of that relation over a line break, is also central to the Miltonic inversion of “wise restraint / Voluptuous” around which Wordsworth builds a relay of sudden discovery, a dallying and equally sudden attack in Nutting:

the hazels rose

Tall and erect, with tempting clusters hung,  
A virgin scene!--A little while I stood,  
Breathing with such suppression of the heart  
As joy delights in; and with wise restraint  
Voluptuous, fearless of a rival, eyed  
The banquet;--or beneath the trees I sate

Among the flowers, and with the flowers I played;  
A temper known to those who, after long  
And weary expectation, have been blest  
With sudden happiness beyond all hope.  
Perhaps it was a bower beneath whose leaves  
The violets of five seasons re-appear  
And fade, unseen by any human eye;  
Where fairy water-breaks do murmur on  
For-ever; and I saw the sparkling foam,  
And - with my cheek on one of those green stones  
That, fleec'd with moss, beneath the shady trees,  
Lay round me, scatter'd like a flock of sheep--  
I heard the murmur and the murmuring sound,  
In that sweet mood when pleasure loves to pay  
Tribute to ease, and of its joy secure,  
The heart luxuriates with indifferent things,  
Wasting its kindliness on stocks and stones,  
And on the vacant air. Then up I rose,  
And dragged to earth both branch and bough, with crash  
And merciless ravage[.]

(W, 147)

The discovery of this inert treasure, a keimelion, provokes the boy's own lying and mock-epic uprising. Delay stays the violent uprising by taking pleasure in restraint, while dallying with



surmise about changes in posture has the feel of filling empty time while building tension toward the sudden event ahead.<sup>95</sup>

The boy's being secure in his joy, fearless of a rival, is what licenses his lingering and temporary restraint.<sup>96</sup> Frédéric Neyrat has recently figured relations between restraint and security in global terms that speak in surprising ways to Wordsworth's poem. One paradox of globalization, Neyrat argues, is found in the way that networks of interconnectedness and cross-fertilization exist alongside what he takes to be a fundamental human drive toward immunity, to remain untouched or entirely secure. Those who inhabit the privileged spheres of the globe strain to be intact, above the networks of connectedness and contagion that at the same time grant them their privilege and expose them to harm. "Everything," for Neyrat, "touches everything else and is not touched."<sup>97</sup> In a powerful rereading of Freud's late account of civilization, Neyrat thinks of the inertial, conservative, earth-oriented tendency of the death drive as no more than a means toward a greater end: never having been harmed in the first place. To remain intact is a kind of primal goal (and, we might infer, to be already dead is to be immune to the threat of harm, absolutely secure). But it is, by Neyrat's account, indistinguishable from surfaces which endlessly touch one another.

To be intact is to remain untouched, even while being touched at all points. Circulating across the lines of this paradoxical relation between contamination and immunity, and bringing them together, is the question of restraint. Neyrat draws attention to a contemporary "lack of restraint" which is to be found both where we might expect it (in the global networks of "contagion" fostered by interconnectedness) but also in the excessive work that organisms invest into their efforts to secure themselves from the threat of contamination.<sup>98</sup> He offers an unexpectedly Wordsworthian response to this paradox by seeking to read the violence of

intervention into a form of restraint which is “not simply abstention,” but which makes contact with the world by touching it.<sup>99</sup> “[W]hen faced with the intact, touch with reticence, such that restraint is internalized within contact itself, and not something external to it,” Neyrat writes, in unconscious echo of the admonition to the “dearest Maiden” at the end of Nutting: “[i]n gentleness of heart with gentle hand / Touch,--for there is a Spirit in the woods” (W, 147).<sup>100</sup>

Restraint, here, is not withheld contact, but is rather assimilated within contact itself, just as Wordsworth’s enjambment allows an imperative to “[t]ouch” in the quick wake of its restraining. The intact remains safe precisely because it is touched. Yet inverting the restraint of a tactful touching of that which remains intact, to paraphrase Derrida, we might note that the first impression offered of the hazel grove suddenly discovered in Nutting is that it carries no “ungracious sign / Of devastation” (W, 147), as if the grove’s very intactness could only be experienced through the signs of harm that Wordsworth remembers himself to have subsequently visited upon it; and as if something about the very experience of the intact, the relation of touchlessness to safety, were what provokes or facilitates attack.<sup>101</sup> “The forest landscape is social,” declares Anna Tsing, writing about the Meratus Mountains of Indonesia, “[y]et almost all scholarship and policy continues to portray forests as wild, natural spaces outside of society.”<sup>102</sup> If the sociality of forests were instead recognized, Tsing argues, “the predominant forms of both resource exploitation and conservation that have been imposed on the area would seem very odd indeed.”<sup>103</sup> It is precisely the idea of something intact that provokes intervention, both as exploitation and restraining protection.

Yet Neyrat insists that “the only saved beings are those who have been destroyed.”<sup>104</sup> Restraining touch enables those objects to bear upon them, he says, “the phantom movement of the death that has not taken place” as an image.<sup>105</sup> An ecological capacity to tolerate this paradox

enables a life somewhere between absolute contagion and pristine refuge, where restraint embodies and neutralizes violence rather than \*creating an impermeable shield against it. As in object-relations psychoanalysis, whose links to Wordsworth have often been noted, it is toleration of frustration or paradox that enables survival of forms of harm which leave their mark at and as the sign of their removal. And here, too, there is a relation to posture. At one moment in his writing around transitional objects, D. W. Winnicott invents the character of the “armchair philosopher,” who intransigently insists that things cannot survive their own destruction.<sup>106</sup> Such a philosopher refuses the key paradox of the transitional object; that, as a later version of the maternal breast, it is at once internal and external to the child, something that can as such always survive harm and can never be destroyed. The child should never be coerced into an undoing of this paradox, says Winnicott. For the armchair philosopher, though, “if an object is external, then the object is destroyed by the subject.”<sup>107</sup> But, Winnicott counters, should such a philosopher “come out of his chair and sit on the floor with his patient . . . he will find that there is an intermediate position.”<sup>108</sup> Subject destroys object; object survives destruction by subject. This shift of view comes out of the exchange of the recalcitrant armchair of logical coherence for an intermediate position, still sitting but on the ground.

Moments of pause only finally appear as spots of refuge, even indestructibility, because of the shadow that destruction and vulnerability cast over them. Perhaps this is why there is such a peculiar ache to the phrase “a little while longer” (or, in Nutting, “[a] little while I stood”), which, in the ecological treatment it receives in the work of Anne-Lise François, seems to know something like redemption precisely as the running out of time. The same phrase comes up again in Frank Capuzzi’s translation of Heidegger’s “Letter on ‘Humanism.’” Instead of abandoning humanism, and risking the violence of the inhuman, Heidegger asks, in Capuzzi’s rendering, if

we should not “rather suffer a little while longer those inevitable misinterpretations to which the path of thinking in the element of being and time has hitherto been exposed and let them slowly dissipate?”<sup>109</sup> Taking shelter in the shadow of a diminishing humanism is the minimal sign of Heideggerian exposure and survival, as much as it orchestrates the proximity of stupor and bombast in his writing. Anyone, for Heidegger, who took the risk to “philosophize about being shattered”--to think their shattered condition, rather than use philosophy as insurance against the risk of damage that has in fact already occurred--would be rewarded with the discovery that “no misfortune would befall him.”<sup>110</sup> Exposure to the possibility of destruction is what allows you to remain intact; but to stay in the security posture of Winnicott’s armchair philosopher would be, contrarily, to shatter against the reefs of metaphysics. Still, being shattered and yet intact means lingering, even now, around humanism. “A little while I stood,” writes Wordsworth, before the crash and merciless ravage that brings the trees to ground.

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#### NOTES

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I’d like to thank Rachel Falconer for her careful reading of an earlier draft of this essay.

<sup>1</sup> Sigmund Freud, “The Moses of Michelangelo,” in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, 24 vol., ed. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955), vol. 13, “Totem and Taboo and Other Works, 216. Hereafter abbreviated M and cited parenthetically by page number.

<sup>2</sup> Victoria Kahn and Christina Lupton have drawn attention to an intertextual relation between Freud’s essay and Giorgio Vasari’s ironical account of the Jews of sixteenth-century Rome coming to “visit and adore” the graven image of the very lawgiver who banned adoration of

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graven images (Kahn, The Future of Illusion: Political Theology and Early Modern Texts [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2014], 155). Freud associates himself with the idolatrous “mob” “which rejoices when it has regained its illusory idols” early on in his essay (M, 213).

<sup>3</sup> Such a reading might resonate with recent reassessments of the secular. Describing the emergence of the secular as “a normative posture toward the world” that, since the Reformation, involves the micromanagement of bodily practices, Colin Jager’s recent account in particular emphasizes stasis, what he calls “the strange and sometimes melancholy stillness of the secular age,” and “[t]he modern phenomenon of belief as something inert” (Unquiet Things: Secularism in the Romantic Age [Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2015], 23, 29).

<sup>4</sup> Homer, The Iliad cited in Elaine Scarry, Dreaming by the Book (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2001), 121 John Milton, Paradise Lost, in The Poems of John Milton ed. John Carey and Alistair Fowler (London: Longmans, 1968), 725, line 807.

<sup>5</sup> William Shakespeare, Hamlet, ed. Robert S. Miola New York: Norton, 2011), act 2, scene 2, line 411.

<sup>6</sup> Hamlet, 22404-6.

<sup>7</sup> William Wordsworth, Translations of Chaucer and Virgil, ed. Bruce Graver (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1998), 226.

<sup>8</sup> For a detailed account of the various delays and redrawn contracts for the tomb project which dogged Michelangelo’s career, see Michelangelo’s Tomb for Julius II: Genesis and Genius, ed. Christoph Luitpold Frommel (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Wordsworth, Miscellaneous Sonnets: From the Italian of Michael Angelo, “XXV (From the Same)”, in Wordsworth: Poetical Works, ed. Thomas Hutchinson and Ernest de Selincourt

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(Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), 204. Hereafter abbreviated W and cited parenthetically by page number.

<sup>10</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” in Coleridge: Poetical Works, ed. E. H. Coleridge (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), 187.

<sup>11</sup> Wordsworth, “The Ruined Cottage” and “The Pedlar,” ed. James Butler (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1979), 43.

<sup>12</sup> Wordsworth, “The Ruined Cottage” and “The Pedlar,” 43-44.

<sup>13</sup> Wordsworth, The Excursion, ed. Sally Bushell, James Butler and Michael C. Jaye (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 2007), 39.

<sup>14</sup> Scarry, 121.

<sup>15</sup> Scarry. 121.

<sup>16</sup> I refer here to the emphatic statements of Percy Bysshe Shelley in The Mask of Anarchy, in Romanticism: An Anthology, ed. Duncan Wu, 4th ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012), 1125, and of Coleridge in Fears in Solitude, in Coleridge, Poetical Works, 260.

<sup>17</sup> Jane Austen, Emma, ed. Steven M. Parrish (New York: Norton, 2000), 96-97.

<sup>18</sup> Anahid Nersessian, Utopia, Limited: Romanticism and Adjustment (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2015), 3, 6.

<sup>19</sup> Marjorie Levinson, “Object-Loss and Object-Bondage: Economies of Representation in Hardy’s Poetry,” ELH 73.2 (2006): 554; The Romantic Fragment Poem: A Critique of Form (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1986), 222. The idea of a “poetry of indifference,” or what Levinson also calls a “discourse of least resistance,” comes from her influential reading of Thomas Hardy’s elegies (554).

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<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Lauren Berlant's notion of "the ordinary as an impasse shaped by crisis" (Cruel Optimism [Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2011], 8). For a dynamic view of background or setting, see also David J. Alworth, Site Reading: Fiction, Art, Social Form (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2015).

<sup>21</sup> My argument here is consonant with Paul North's stunning recent account of yielding in Franz Kafka, which "isn't sublimation; it isn't loss or 'lost time'" even as it "abandons all claim to self-possession" (The Yield: Kafka's Atheological Reformation [Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2015], 29). Kafka's world in North's account is instead an entirely full world, where action can only take away rather than make anything new, and where consequently "the only movement is pause" (xv). The great acceleration might be historicized in different ways, including the beginning of the mass-burning of fossil fuels in the late eighteenth century. Recent arguments emphasize acceleration's own relation to lag or delay; fossil fuel burning "jump-started the anthropocene" and is (hopefully) tapering off, but its effects will "linger for millennia to come" (J. R. McNeill and Peter Engleke, The Great Acceleration: An Environmental History of the Anthropocene Since 1945 [Cambridge: Belknap, 2014], 6).

<sup>22</sup> Geoffrey Hartman, Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814 (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1964), 17.

<sup>23</sup> Hartman, Wordsworth's Poetry, 5.

<sup>24</sup> For Hartman's explanation for his use of the word "apocalypse," see Wordsworth's Poetry, x. For Hartman's later speculations on the "anti-traumatic" work of poetry, see his "Wordsworth and Metapsychology," in Wordsworth's Poetic Theory: Knowledge, Language, Experience, ed. Alexander Regier and Stefan H. Uhling (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), 196.

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<sup>25</sup> I refer here especially to the Simplon past episode: “I was lost; / Halted without an effort to break through (W, 535). It is the site of the vale of Chamonix after the disappointment of Mont Blanc that reconciled Wordsworth and Jones to realities. I write “quasi-heroic” in reference to Alan Liu’s iconic reading of the Simplon pass episode in relation to Napoleon’s crossing of the Alps, which would read halting as a figure of historical denial; see Liu, Wordsworth: The Sense of History (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1989), 23-31. My aim here is to stay with the shape of the pause, rather than quickly coding it in epistemological terms as the site of an Althusserian “absent cause” (Wordsworth: The Sense of History, 39).

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Freud’s discussion of \*what James Strachey calls the “archaic heritage” to explain the transmission of the original trauma of the murder of the primal father, and its repetition in the murder of Moses and Christ, in Moses and Monotheism: “It must have undergone the fate of being repressed, the condition of lingering in the unconscious [Zustand des verweilens in unbewussten durchgemacht haben], before it is able to display such powerful effects on its return, to bring the masses under its spell” (The Origins of Religion, trans. James Strachey Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990, 347. Just prior to Moses’s (missed) rage, the people ask Aaron to “make us gods” when Moses “delayed to come down out of the mount” (Exodus 32:1). The sense already in Exodus is that any tarrying is dangerous, since it allows empty, future time to be filled with the erroneous hobby of making idols.

<sup>27</sup> Henry James, The Golden Bowl, ed. Virginia Llewellyn Smith (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009), 107.

<sup>28</sup> Hartman, “The Use and Abuse of Structural Analysis: Riffaterre’s Interpretation of Wordsworth’s ‘Yew Trees,’” New Literary History 7.1 (1975): 182.



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<sup>29</sup> As Lily Gurton-Wachter writes, “attention suggests a bending or a stretching of the mind toward an object, though not too far, lest one get lost in the object itself” (Watchwords: Romanticism and the Poetics of Attention [Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2015], 1).

<sup>30</sup> Gurton-Wachter, 86, 14.

<sup>31</sup> Coleridge, Poetical Works, 187.

<sup>32</sup> Gurton-Wachter, 86.

<sup>33</sup> Giorgio Agamben, The Use of Bodies, trans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2016), 80.

<sup>34</sup> Agamben, The Use of Bodies, 119.

<sup>35</sup> Wordsworth, “The Discharged Soldier,” in William Wordsworth: The Major Works, including “The Prelude”, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), 46.

<sup>36</sup> “The Discharged Soldier,” 46, 48.

<sup>37</sup> Gurton-Wachter, 88. Wordsworth might instead be investigating the same zone of ambivalence as Giorgio Agamben, whose homo sacer is both a figure of abjection and a possible utopian horizon of the inoperative. The discomfort at this equivalence seems to be policed by Agamben’s treatment of shame and his repeated attacks on Georges Bataille’s making of the abject sacred, especially in Homo Sacer. For the utopian/abjection collision, see the last chapter of Agamben’s Remnants of Auschwitz, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone, 2002). For a further treatment of Wordsworth and the musselmänner, see David Simpson, Wordsworth, Commodification and Social Concern: The Poetics of Modernity (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2009).

<sup>38</sup> North, The Yield, 20.

<sup>39</sup> North, The Yield, 20.

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<sup>40</sup> Wordsworth, "The Ruined Cottage" and "The Pedlar", 45.

<sup>41</sup> Wordsworth, "The Ruined Cottage" and "The Pedlar", 49, 59.

<sup>42</sup> Wordsworth, "The Ruined Cottage" and "The Pedlar", 75; Milton, Lycidas, in The Poems of John Milton, 254, lines 192-3.

<sup>43</sup> Milton, Lycidas, in The Poems of John Milton, 254, lines 190-1. For a sophisticated argument about how "anti-elegiac mourning" refuses consolation, see G. Clifton Spargo, The Ethics of Mourning: Grief and Responsibility in Elegiac Literature (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2004), 142.

<sup>44</sup> Part of the dramatic force of James's later novels is found in their extraordinary concentration on shifts in posture that turn out, like Samuel Beckett's in my epigraph, to be entirely inconsequential. Like Coleridge's wedding guest and the William of "Expostulation and Reply," Millie Theale is discovered by Mrs. Stringham early on in The Wings of the Dove "seated at her ease" on a "slab of rock" (The Wings of the Dove, ed. J. Donald Crowley and Richard A. Hocks [New York: Norton, 1978], 87). Later, wandering through London under the suspicion that she is terminally ill, Milly feels herself making "all the effort of the military posture" (152) before choosing to "linger and rest" (154) on a bench in Regents Park, while gazing at her "melancholy comrades"--"some of them so melancholy as to be down on their stomachs in the grass, ignoring, burrowing" (156). I'm grateful to Patrick Jones for the references to James.

<sup>45</sup> Hartman, Wordsworth's Poetry, 75.

<sup>46</sup> Coleridge, "Fears in Solitude," in Poetical Works, 258. For "a little while longer" and the figure of the Paraclete who comes to comfort the disciples after Jesus's death, see Anne-Lise François's contribution to "About Geoffrey Hartman: Materials for a Study of Intellectual Influence," Philological Quarterly 93.2 (2014): 181. Her reading of Hartman's treatments of the

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Paraclete connects the fragile time of Jesus's remaining life to ecological catastrophe. "Yet a little while (eti micron) and the world seeth me no more," says Jesus to the disciples (John 14:19). The phrase yet a little while occurs at key places in Wordsworth's writing, including in the address to Dorothy at the end of Tintern Abbey (1798) and, as I go on to discuss, in Nutting.

<sup>47</sup> Coleridge, "Fears in Solitude," in Poetical Works, 258.

<sup>48</sup> Susan Stewart, Poetry and the Fate of the Senses (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2002), 197.

<sup>49</sup> Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in Illuminations, ed. Hannah Arendt (London: Fontana, 1992), 249.

<sup>50</sup> Benjamin, 248. I'd like to thank Fabien Schaedler for making this thought about Coleridge possible in his reading of the poem.

<sup>51</sup> Benjamin, 246.

<sup>52</sup> Christopher S. Nealon, "Camp Messianism, or the Hopes of Poetry in Late-Late Capitalism," American Literature 76.3 (2004): 580.

<sup>53</sup> John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn," in John Keats: The Complete Poems, ed. John Barnard (London: Penguin, 2006), 344.

<sup>54</sup> Wordsworth, The Prelude (1805), in The Major Works, 553; John Keats, "On Seeing the Elgin Marbles," in The Complete Poems, 99.

<sup>55</sup> Carmen Faye Mathes, "'Let us not therefore go hurrying about': Towards an Aesthetics of Passivity in Keats's Poetics," European Romantic Review 25.3 (2014): 310.

<sup>56</sup> Liu, 313; Wordsworth, "The Ruined Cottage" and "The Pedlar", 75.

<sup>57</sup> See, for example, Richard Adelman, Idleness, Contemplation and the Aesthetic 1750-1830 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2011).

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<sup>58</sup> See Rei Terada, Looking Away: Phenomenality and Dissatisfaction, Kant to Adorno (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2009).

<sup>59</sup> Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading, Reparative Reading: Or, you're so paranoid, you probably think this essay is about you," in Sedgwick, Touching Feeling: Affect, Performativity, Pedagogy (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2003), 134.

<sup>60</sup> Milton, Lycidas, in The Poems of John Milton, 251, 153.

<sup>61</sup> Hartman, Wordsworth's Poetry, 10.

<sup>62</sup> Jager, 145.

<sup>63</sup> Hartman, Wordsworth's Poetry, 73.

<sup>64</sup> As if to confirm his own thesis about its having become a generalized structure in the Romantic period, Hartman's argument about surmise is delivered in the form of surmise. He claims that surmise "likes 'whether . . . or' formulations," before writing that Wordsworth's surmises "have a pattern," to move "though the solitary to the social and from stasis to motion, or to make these interchangeable" (Wordsworth's Poetry, 8-9).

<sup>65</sup> J. Douglas Kneale, "Gentle Hearts and Hands: Reading Wordsworth After Geoffrey Hartman," in The Wordsworthian Enlightenment: Romantic Poetry and the Ecology of Reading, ed. Helen Regueiro and Frances Ferguson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2005), 237.

<sup>66</sup> Milton, Paradise Lost, in The Poems of John Milton, 884 lines 463, 465.

<sup>67</sup> Milton, Paradise Lost, in The Poems of John Milton, 550, lines 917-8. In his note on the bottom of the same page regarding book 1, lines 917-18, Fowler argues that "Bentley's 'stupid' [!] objection that Into this wild abyss cannot [sic] related to stood is a critical felix culpa" since it directs attention to mimetic syntax. The lack of a verb of motion after "into" "render[s] the wary fiend's repeated hesitations" (Milton, Paradise Lost, 550). There is a Miltonic source for

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Romantic, especially Austenian, passivity in the sonnets, too; see François's reading of "They also serve who only stand and wait," in Open Secrets: The Literature of Uncounted Experience (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2007), 224.

<sup>68</sup> Milton, Paradise Regained, in The Poems of John Milton, 1162, lines 560-62. For a lucid commentary on these lines, and standing in Milton, see Neil Forsyth, "Having Done All to Stand: Biblical and Classical Allusion in Paradise Regained," Milton Studies 21 (1985): 199-215.

<sup>69</sup> Rebecca Comay, "Resistance and Repetition: Freud and Hegel," Research in Phenomenology 45 (2015): 239.

<sup>70</sup> Comay, "Resistance and Repetition," 239.

<sup>71</sup> Comay, "Resistance and Repetition," 240.

<sup>72</sup> Comay, "Resistance and Repetition," 239.

<sup>73</sup> Hartman, "Inscriptions and Romantic Nature Poetry," in The Unremarkable Wordsworth (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1987), 32.

<sup>74</sup> Hartman, "Inscriptions and Nature Poetry," 32.

<sup>75</sup> Hartman, "Inscriptions and Nature Poetry," 44.

<sup>76</sup> Hartman, "Inscriptions and Nature Poetry," 45.

<sup>77</sup> John Keats to Richard Woodhouse, 27 October 1818, in John Keats: Selected Letters, ed. Robert Gittings and John Mee (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002), 147.

<sup>78</sup> Keats to J. H. Reynolds, 3 February 1818, in John Keats: Selected Letters, 58.

<sup>79</sup> Shakespeare, As You Like It, ed. Alan Brissenden (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), act 2, scene 1, lines 30-35.

<sup>80</sup> Anne Carson, "The Blaney Lecture: Anne Carson," YouTube.com, 11 January 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jb6JW89EF5U>, 13:37.

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<sup>81</sup> Carson, “The Blaney Lecture,” 13:41-50. \*Thank you to Iain Campbell for help here with the ancient Greek.

<sup>82</sup> Jonathan Culler, Theory of the Lyric (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2015), 259.

<sup>83</sup> Comay, Mourning Sickness: Hegel and the French Revolution (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2011), 95. Hereafter abbreviated MS and cited parenthetically by page number.

<sup>84</sup> Hartman, “Wordsworth Before Heidegger,” in The Unremarkable Wordsworth, 206.

<sup>85</sup> Hartman, “Wordsworth Before Heidegger,” 206.

<sup>86</sup> Quoted in Hartman, “Wordsworth Before Heidegger,” 197.

<sup>87</sup> Hartman, “Wordsworth Before Heidegger,” 197.

<sup>88</sup> Hartman, “Wordsworth Before Heidegger,” 197.

<sup>89</sup> Jager, 148.

<sup>90</sup> Georg Hegel, writes Comay, is in fact “the first to notice the strange mixture of thrill and boredom” in the theatre of Revolutionary violence (MS, 72).

<sup>91</sup> Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2002), 149. See also their comments about the death drive, agitation, and “hardening”: “immobile nature, which living creatures, like Daphne, seek with utmost agitation to become” (148).

<sup>92</sup> Quoted in Willard Spiegelman, Majestic Indolence (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995), 39.

<sup>93</sup> Quoted and discussed in Gurton-Wachter, Watchwords, 93; and Ewan Jones, Coleridge and the Philosophy of Poetic Form (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2014), 58.

<sup>94</sup> Stewart, 122; Stewart also discusses the play of pre- and post-medial caesura and enjambment, and its creation of effects of what ballad criticism has called leaping and lingering. François writes that in the poem’s “alternation of weak and strong enjambments carrying . . . over ten

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lines, we hear both the precariousness of going on when met with silence and the inevitability of continuing, as the “pauses”--moments of “uncertain” abandonment (reduced to caesuras)--make the deferral of response a part of its reception” (Open Secrets, 162).

<sup>95</sup> Post-Hartman, the critical literature on Nutting is vast, and very much concerned with issues of delay and passivity. As David Bromwich argues in his reading of the poem, Wordsworth “always reserves some particle of respect for those who do not act” (Disowned by Memory: Wordsworth’s Poetry of the 1790s [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1998], 119). Frances Ferguson accounts for the poem’s shift from ease to violence, which I go on to consider, as about the boy-nutter’s feeling deluded into a scripted pastoral ease, “as if violent action were the only way of avoiding his sense of becoming trapped in the perceptions and language which create narrative roles for him” (Wordsworth: Language as Counter-Spirit [New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1977], 75). For important studies of the poem’s relation to humanistic and Renaissance forebears and its thinking of the relationship between enlightenment and rage, see Jonathan Arac, “Wordsworth’s Nutting: Suspension and Decision,” in Critical Genealogies: Historical Situations for Postmodern Literary Studies (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1987), 34-49; and Arnd Bohm, “Wordsworth’s ‘Nutting’ and the Ovidian ‘Nux,’” Studies in Romanticism 45.1 (2006): 25-48.

<sup>96</sup> On Freud’s account of foreplay, which he takes in the Three Essays on Sexuality to be a perverse lingering over sexual objects “which should normally be traversed rapidly on the path towards the final sexual aim” and its relation to Nutting, see Kneale, “Gentle Hearts and Hands.” 237.

<sup>97</sup> Frédéric Neyrat, “Intact,” trans. Roxanne Lapidus, SubStance 40.3 (2011): 105.

<sup>98</sup> Neyrat, 111.

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<sup>99</sup> Neyrat, 112.

<sup>100</sup> Neyrat, 113.

<sup>101</sup> For a discussion of Derrida's claim that "[to] touch with tact is to touch without touching that which does not let itself be touched" in relation to Nutting's tactility and admonition, see Mary Jacobus, "Touching Things: 'Nutting' and the Standing of Trees," in Romantic Things: A Tree, A Rock, A Cloud (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2012), 65.

<sup>102</sup> Anna Tsing, Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2004), xi

<sup>103</sup> Anna Tsing, Friction, xi. The model of friction that Tsing explores here as a mode of interconnectivity might harden or materialize Neyrat's and Wordsworth's calls for a gentle touch which internalizes violence.

<sup>104</sup> Neyrat, 112.

<sup>105</sup> Neyrat, 112.

<sup>106</sup> D. W. Winnicott, "The Use of an Object and Relating Through Identifications," in Playing and Reality (London: Routledge, 2005), 120.

<sup>107</sup> Winnicott, 120.

<sup>108</sup> Winnicott, 120. On managing this paradox, see Barbara Johnson, Persons and Things (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2008), 102.

<sup>109</sup> Martin Heidegger, "Letter on 'Humanism,'" trans. Frank A. Capuzzi, in Pathmarks, ed. William McNeill (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), 263.

<sup>110</sup> Heidegger, 261.