

A

- The Solitary lifted toward the hills
 A kindling eye : - accordant feelings rushed
 Into my bosom, whence these words broke forth :
 5 « Oh what a joy it were, in vigorous health,
 To have a body (this our vital frame
 With shrinking sensibility ended,
 And all the nice regards of flesh and blood)
 And to the elements surrender it
 As if it were a spirit ! — How divine,
 10 The liberty, for frail, for mortal man
 To roam at large among unpeopled glens
 And mountainous retirements, only trod
 By devious footsteps ; regions consecrate
 To oldest time ! and, reckless of the storm
 15 That keeps the raven quiet in her nest,
 Be as a presence or a motion — one
 Among the many there ; and while the mists
 Flying, and rainy vapours, call out shapes
 And phantoms from the crags and solid earth
 20 As fast as a musician scatters sounds
 Out of an instrument ; and while the streams
 (As at a first creation and in haste
 To exercise their untried faculties)
 Descending from the regions of the clouds,
 25 And starting from the hollows of the earth
 More multitudinous every moment, rend
 Their way before them — what a joy to roam
 An equal among mightiest energies ;
 And haply sometimes with articulate voice,
 30 Amid the deafening tumult, scarcely heard
 By him that utters it, exclaim aloud,
 'Rage on, ye elements ! let moon and stars
 Their aspects lend, and mingle in their turn
 With this commotion (ruinous though it be)
 35 From day to night, from night to day, prolonged ! »

William WORDSWORTH. *The Excursion*. 1814. London, Longman, Hurst, Rees,

Orme and Brown.

Book IV, Despondency Corrected, ll. 505-539

The Poetical Works of Wordsworth, 1936, London,

O.U.P. Pp. 808-809

- Downwards we hurried fast
 And, with the half-shaped road which we had missed,
 Entered a narrow chasm. The brook and road
 5 Were fellow-travellers in this gloomy strait,
 And with them did we journey several hours
 At a slow pace. The immeasurable height
 Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
 The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
 10 And in the narrow rent at every turn
 Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
 The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
 The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
 Black drizzling crags that spake by the way-side
 15 As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
 And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
 The unfettered clouds and region of the Heavens,
 Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light-
 Were all like workings of one mind, the features
 20 Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree ;
 Characters of the great Apocalypse,
 The types and symbols of Eternity,
 Of first and last, and midst, and without end.

William WORDSWORTH. *The Prelude*. 1850. London, Edward Moxon.

Book VI, Cambridge and the Alps, ll.619-640

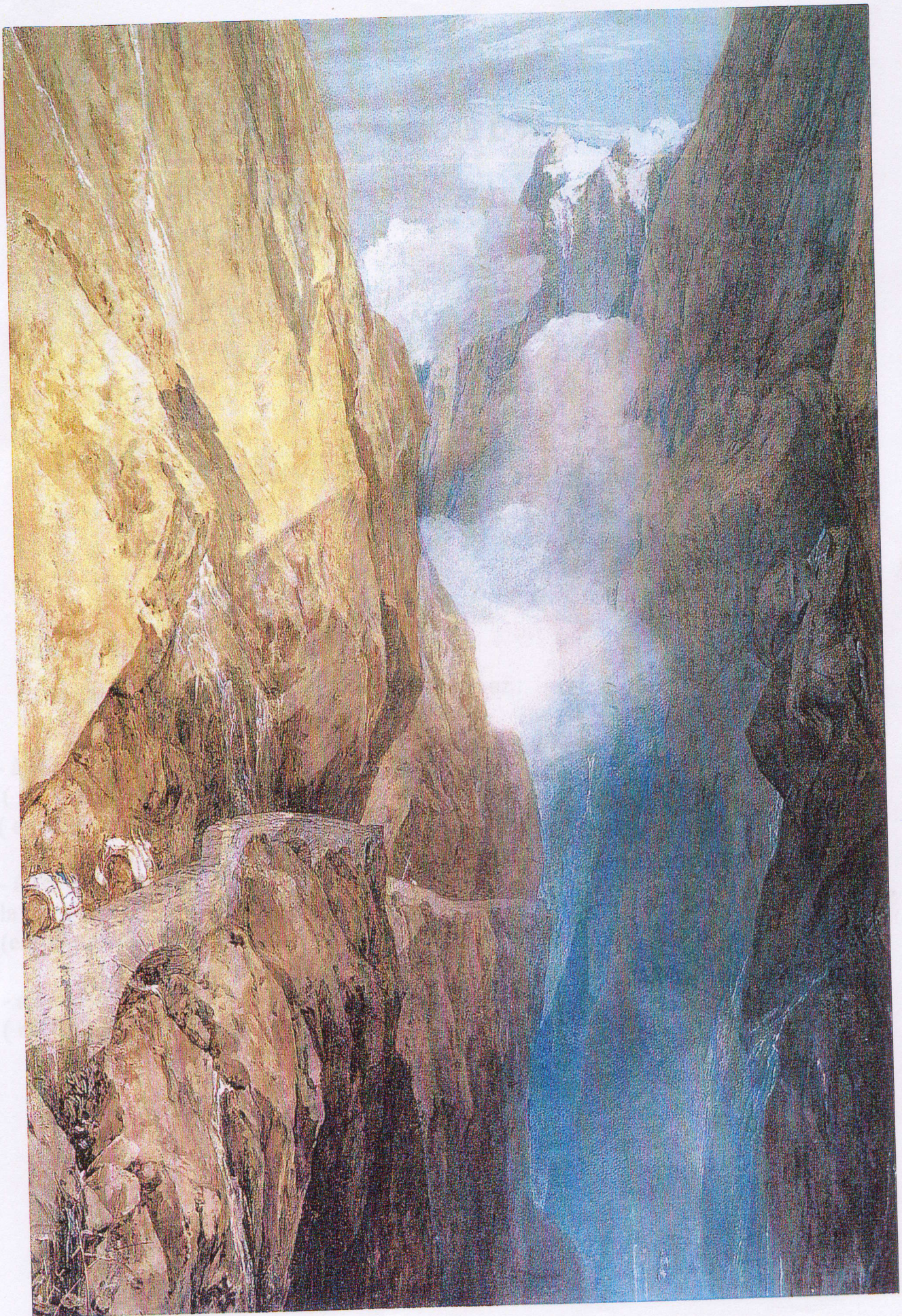
The Poetical Works of Wordsworth, 1936, London,

O.U.P. p.684

§ 21. Such precipices are among the most impressive as well as the most really dangerous of mountain ranges ; in many spots inaccessible with safety either from below or from above ; dark in colour, robed with everlasting mourning, for ever tottering like a great fortress shaken by war, fearful as much in their weakness as in their strength, and yet gathered after every fall into darker frowns and unhumiliated threatening ; for ever incapable of comfort or of healing from herb or flower, nourishing no root in their crevices, touched by no hue of life on buttress or ledge, but, to the utmost, desolate ; knowing no shaking of leaves in the wind, nor of grass beside the stream, (no motion but their own mortal shivering, the dreadful crumbling of atom from atom in their corrupting stones ; knowing no sound of living voice or living tread, cheered neither by the kid's bleat nor the marmot's cry ; haunted only by uninterrupted echoes from far off, wandering hither and thither, among their walls, unable to escape, and by the hiss of angry torrents, and sometimes the shriek of a bird that flits near the face of them, and sweeps frightened back from under their shadow into the gulph of air ; and, sometimes, when the echo has faded, and the wind has carried the sound of the torrent away, and the bird has vanished, and the mouldering stones are still for a little time, — a brown moth, opening and shutting its wings upon a grain of dust, may be the only thing that moves, or feels, in all the waste of the precipice, darkening five thousand feet of the blue depth of heaven.

* 20 § 22. It will not be thought that there is nothing in a scene such as this deserving our contemplation, or capable of conveying useful lessons, if it were fitly rendered by art. I cannot myself conceive any picture more impressive than a faithful rendering of such a cliff would be, supposing the aim of the artist to be the utmost tone of sad sublime. I am, nevertheless, aware of no instance in which the slightest attempt has been made to express their character ; the reason being, partly, the extreme difficulty of the task, partly the want of temptation in specious colour or form. For the majesty of this kind of cliff depends entirely on its size : a low range of such rock is as uninteresting as it is ugly ; and it is only by making the spectator understand the enormous scale of their desolation, and the space which the shadow of their danger oppresses, that any impression can be made upon his mind. And this scale cannot be expressed by any artifice ; the mountain cannot be made to look large by painting it blue or faint, otherwise it loses all its ghastliness. It must be painted in its own near and solemn colours, black and ashen grey ; and its size must be expressed by thorough drawing of its innumerable details — pure quantity — with certain points of comparison explanatory of the whole. This is no light task ; and attempted by any man of ordinary genius, would need steady and careful painting for three or four months ; while to such a man, there would appear to be nothing worth his toil in the gloom of the subject, unrelieved as it is even by variety of form ; for the soft rock of which these cliffs are composed rarely breaks into bold masses ; and the gloom of their effect partly depends on its not doing so.

John RUSKIN. *Modern Painters*, 1856. London, Smith Elder and Co
Part V, 'Of Mountain Beauty', chapter XVI, 'Precipices'.
G. Allen & Sons, 1910, London, pp. 255-257



J.M.W. TURNER, *The Passage of Mount St Gothard, taken from the Centre of the Teufels Bruch (Devil's Bridge), Switzerland. 1804*, Watercolour on paper, 101 X 68 cm.
Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kendal