

Night music

by [J. Barrie Shepherd](#) in the [April 3, 2007](#) issue

These Yorkshire fells and dales
appear ever to be falling away,
toppling from Emily's wuthering heights
into wide accommodating valleys
carved by Derwent, Calder, Ribble and the rest
then trimmed by flocks of patient sheep
that crop the slopes and shoulders round
toward that verdant jeweled Jerusalem
folk hereby love to sing about.

Up here, along the tops, however,
driving tight along the teetering edge,
mad vertigo hangs you out there in the balances,
suspended in that stomach-clutching space
between this summit and the next,
flung far into the spinning turn,
the terrible excellence of things.

Might it be that way also at the end,
nothing all that dark and dreadful,
but a life-demanding climb,
agonizing to be sure, all the gasping way
along and up some looming harsh escarpment
grasping toward the final summit where, at last,
you stumble forward into emptiness
to find everything . . . all at once?