The theme of Revelation is apocalypse: the end of the world and the coming of Christ in judgement. The date of the composition was probably some time in the nineties AD. One of the most controversial and quoted texts of the New Testament, The Revelation of St John the Divine has inspired and troubled artists, poets and seers through the ages.

As poet, playwright and actor, Heathcote Williams has made a significant contribution to many fields. He is best known for his extended poems on environmental subjects, Whale Nation (1988), Falling for a Dolphin (1988), Sacred Elephant (1989) and Autogeddon (1991). But his plays have also won acclaim, notably AC/DC, produced at London’s Royal Court, and Hancock’s Last Half Hour. As an actor he has been equally versatile – among his most memorable roles was Prospero in Derek Jarman’s film of The Tempest.

The author is not the John who wrote the Gospel. The theme of Revelation is apocalypse: the end of the world and the coming of Christ in judgment. The style and imagery have been unkindly described as ‘deranged’ (A.N. Wilson), and they are certainly unlike anything else in the New Testament. It should be remembered, however, that for the earliest Christians the Second Coming was expected at any time and in any case in the very near future. Revelation is the work of a prophet, and is a unique part of the New Testament canon. It bears vivid witness to this sense of an apocalyptic atmosphere and undoubtedly possesses a terrible beauty. The author is on the island of Patmos and addresses the seven churches of Asia Minor. The date of composition is likely to be some time in the nineties AD.

Notes by Perry Keenlyside