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Wordsworth and the Mountains: The Crossing of the Alps and the Ascent to Snowdon

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The mere sight of mountains is likely to touch men. The physical beauty is only one aspect of mountains, however: they are associated with perspective as well—larger areas can be seen from the top of mountains. The conquest of a mountain involves upward movement, directing the climber towards the sky, which is at once a majestic and mysterious experience. For various peoples mountains have mythical significance, for others they represent the sublime. No matter which age, mountains have had a profound influence on the imagination.

Mountains seem to possess a special importance for Wordsworth. There are two very significant sections dealing with mountains—both are to be found in *The Prelude*, his poem written as preparation for his great synthesising poem to come, though never to be actually written, *The Recluse*. The two mountain-passages may indicate something of Wordsworth's original intentions concerning the great poem: his most significant passages on the imagination are elaborated following descriptions of experiences connected with mountains—the Simplon Pass episode and the ascent to Snowdon. These are examined during the course of this paper, each in its turn and in their relation to each other, revealing similarities and differences at the same time, and a structural connection which may render the Snowdon episode as the successful complementation of the somewhat controversial experience of the crossing of the Alps.

The Alps

The crossing of the Alps is not intended as a climbing to reach the peak of any mountain; it is not real climbing in the sense that there is no upward and no subsequent downward movement. The very problem of the incident is the unpleasant recognition that Wordsworth misses the Alps—a rather frustrating discovery for the young and ambitious traveller who is full of sublime expectations. From the point of view of the outcome of the venture it may be relevant to point out the fact that the Alpine journey is simply a part of a longer one, it is not primarily a destination in itself. It is a

part of something larger, though it is a very significant part. Before the scene of the actual crossing is narrated, Wordsworth describes an experience which may imply something as far as the crossing is concerned: the words of the divine are heard sounding over the Convent of Chartreuse. This surprising revelation is an indication foreshadowing the disappointment of the subsequent experience of Wordsworth's missing of the Simplon Pass.

The episode in which Wordsworth and his companion cross the Alps is located well after the middle section of Book Sixth of *The Prelude*. Book Sixth bears the title "Cambridge and the Alps'; it is only in the second half of this part that the walking tour in France is described, and the crossing of the Alps is intended as the culmination of this journey. There is great preparation and anticipation: as D. B. Pirie explains it, at that time the scenery of the Alps was generally considered to raise profound emotions from the spectator when he was on the spot and to reward him with an admiring audience when he was retelling his experience afterwards (Pirie 13–14). The reader then naturally brings a set of expectations to this section of the text only to face the actual words with disappointment as Wordsworth deflates all kinds of anticipations by his admittance of their 'failure' to attain the exaltation expected. The 'failure' is only partly a failure: it is true that Wordsworth and his fellow traveller, and consequently the reader as well, miss the dignified feelings as they cross the Alps without noticing it, but out of this situation grows one of the finest passages of the whole text, describing the descending part of the journey across the Simplon Pass.

Before Wordsworth and his companion can catch a glimpse of the Alps, they travel through the whole country. France abounds in scenes of celebration: the revolution is at its height. Wordsworth finds delight in this, however, there is one scene in which the actions of the revolution create ambivalent feelings in him: this is the scene of the small monastery under siege. As they are approaching the Convent of Chartreuse they witness the march of "riotous men commissioned to expel / The blameless inmates" (229, ll. 425–426) from the monastery. A contrast can be observed between the "silence visible and perpetual calm" of the convent and the implied noise and violence of the "riotous men". The continuation of the passage, however, offers a more significant contrast than this: the thundering voice of nature intervenes in favour of the monastery:

> —'Stay, stay your sacrilegious hands!'—The voice
> Was Nature's, uttered from her Alpine throne;
> I heard it then, and seem to hear it now—
> 'Your impious work forbear: perish what may,

> Let this one temple last, be this one spot
> Of earth devoted to eternity!' (229, ll. 430–435)

Under the influence of "conflicting passions" Wordsworth hails the newly born freedom but consents to support the preservation of the monastery as one of the important "courts of mystery". The zeal of the young man is checked by the reverence which Nature calls on to exercise in the convent; the convent in turn comes to be converted into a mystical place where worldly considerations stop short together with time, and the "heaven-imparted truth" becomes something synonymous for Wordsworth with what he reads as

> ...that imaginative impulse sent
> From these majestic floods, yon shining cliffs,
> The untransmuted shapes of many worlds,
> Cerulean ether's pure inhabitants,
> These forests unapproachable by death, [...] (231, ll. 462–466)

—that is, the truth that he reads from Nature.

An important element of the passage dealing with the convent is the idea of the place as a work of man "devoted to eternity". In the passage describing the descent from the Simplon Pass elements of nature are referred to as "[t]he types and symbols of Eternity". The concept of eternity might provide a link between the two passages here, and in such a way the reader may be tempted to feel an elaborate and very carefully planned structure: the voice of Nature personified is thus present even before the desired destination is reached; it is sounded when and where it is the least expected, and this may foreshadow something of the later moments.

Wordsworth and his companion reach their most important destination after this incident: this destination is the "wondrous Vale / Of Chamouny". That is the place from where they can have the first glimpse of Mont Blanc but the sight of the mighty mountain is accompanied by different feelings than would be expected:

> That very day,
> From a bare ridge we also first beheld
> Unveiled the summit of Mont Blanc, and grieved
> To have a soulless image on the eye
> That had usurped upon a living thought
> That never more could be. (235, ll. 523–528)

The grief is felt over that "soulless image" which may probably be read as the thwarted anticipation felt when the first sight of Mont Blanc does not lead to the expected sense of the sublime, the wonder and awe generally associated with the pure sight of the mountain. The language here becomes rather

obscure; especially the word "usurp" is enigmatic; however, this seems to be one of the favourite words of Wordsworth in passages of utmost significance. The ambiguity of the passage seems to lie in the problem whether it is the "soulless image" or the eye which "had usurped upon a living thought". The usurpation of the "soulless image" seems more acceptable and in that case the passage may be read as another element of foreshadowing: the anticipated sublime experience is not likely to be fulfilled.

The scene, despite the initial inconvenience of experience, is a kind of 'book' for the young travellers:

> ...we could not choose but read
> Lessons of genuine brotherhood, the plain
> And universal reason of mankind,
> The truths of young and old. (235, ll. 544–547)

There is education offered by the sight and during their meditative hours "dreams and fictions" abound. The beginning of the next passage, however, mixes something disturbing with these dreams, and the awkward syntax of the following sentence adds to the ambiguity of the experience:

> Yet still in me with those soft luxuries
> Mixed something of stern mood, an under-thirst
> Of vigour seldom utterly allayed. (237, ll. 557–559)

That "stern mood" may suggest thoughts and feelings of a different kind, the rapture of dreams may be checked by some more serious concerns which are not clarified by Wordsworth. The implication, however, that there is something different there is enough and the experience that follows justifies this. It is not clear, though, whether Wordsworth felt this ambivalence on the very spot or it is something that belongs to the moments when he is composing these lines.

The description of the actual crossing the Alps is not a supreme one: it is a very simple account of how they were left behind in the "halting-place" and when they set off to join the others how they failed to do so. The anticipated dignity of the scene is nowhere to be found, the experience becomes a source of frustration and disappointment. Wordsworth, however, is not afraid of exposing his 'folly' of having too many and too great expectations.

Wordsworth and his friend take the road of the Simplon Pass. They follow a "band of muleteers" and they come to a place where the whole company settles to have their meal. The muleteers continue their way right after this, whereas the two young men linger on for some time. Their intention is to catch up with the company and they set off to find them: they are presumably further ahead on the same road. Wordsworth and his friend, however, fail to meet them: they come to a juncture and take the more

inviting path that leads upwards. As time passes their increasing worries are justified and the peasant they meet tells them that they have come the wrong way. Instead of the upward path they have to follow the stream and this can be translated in only one way—they have a downward journey to take.

If the passage is read carefully, it turns out that the highest point during their journey is the "halting-place", their way leads downward from there: when they set off to join the others they "paced the beaten downward way that led / Right to a rough stream's edge, there broke off" (237, ll. 568–569). When they learn from the peasant that they have to return to the juncture, they have to descend there. The road to take follows the stream—as streams have downslope courses, they are to have a downward walk for the rest of their journey. The "halting-place" then is the highest part of their journey, the 'climax', however, is missed. Consciousness of this is gained only when they learn that a downward course is ahead, and the disappointment is so overwhelming that Wordsworth does not return to the scene which was the highest location for them in the whole course of their Alpine experience.

The passage that follows the 'crossing' is addressed to the imagination. Wordsworth apologises for the use of this word, pointing at the "sad incompetence of human speech" as the cause for his choice. This "Power" (this word is hardly less overused than the other one) rises unexpectedly, which is compared to the sudden appearance of "an unfathered vapour". Wordsworth is lost in this moment of 'usurpation'—nothing remains for him but the humble admittance of the might of his soul: "I recognise thy glory" (239, l. 599). The word "usurpation" is heavily loaded as it is used here—the imagination 'usurps' on the senses of the poet and he is lost; yet the moment is also an instance of the "inherent paradox of the imagination", as Geoffrey Hartmann explains:

> [...] the imagination, because it depends on a human will "vexing its own creation," hiding itself or its generating source like mist, cannot be true either to itself or to Nature, unless usurped by a third power (here the immortal soul) at the moment when the creative will is at rest, as after an intense expectation or when the possibility of willed recognition has been removed. (Hartmann, 13)

The experience is doubtless accompanied by an intense expectation and it is after the removal of the willed recognition that the sublime vision can occur, with its intimation of infinity, and this is all facilitated by the usurping soul. This constitutes the fundamental greatness of the human being, this gives the essence of human life:

> ...with a flash that has revealed
> The invisible world, doth greatness make abode,
> There harbours, whether we be young or old.
> Our destiny, our being's heart and home,
> Is with infinitude, and only there;
> With hope it is, hope that can never die,
> Effort, and expectation, and desire,
> And something evermore about to be. (239, ll. 601–608)

The soul then is infinite, and consequently the true home of man is to be found in "infinitude". When this recognition is made there are no further proofs required of the glory of the soul:

> Under such banners militant, the soul
> Seeks for no trophies, struggles for no spoils
> That may attest her prowess, blest in thoughts
> That are their own perfection and reward,
> Strong in herself and in beatitude
> That hides her, like the mighty flood of Nile
> Poured forth from his fount of Abyssinian clouds
> To fertilise the whole Egyptian plain. (239, ll. 609–616)

The image of the Nile is the adequate one to conclude such a passage. As Pirie points out, during the flood the river breaks through those very banks which define it, here the soul sheds its self-consciousness (Pirie 44). This allows it to recognise its true glory and to receive the vision of infinity.

After Wordsworth's humble recognition of the greatness of the soul comes another passage of profound significance. The description of the downward journey could naturally be the falling line of the narration of the crossing of the Alps, with due attention paid to the climax. The climax, however, has been missed and Wordsworth did not pay too much attention to the rising line, the upward movement either. Consequently, the most emphatic part of the whole journey across the Alps is the descent from the Simplon Pass, as far as the description is concerned. This passage abounds in great phrases and it contains a line, the concluding one of the whole passage, which is considered as "the most inclusive line of English poetry" (Pirie 21).

The momentary melancholy and disappointment of the travellers give way to something more pleasant as they take their downward journey. They quickly leave behind the feeling of disappointment as they return to the juncture; their walking pace becomes slow once again in the "gloomy strait": Wordsworth's mind seems to be preparing for some majestic experience. The

expectations are justified this time and the experience which awaits them in the "narrow chasm" is something verging on the visionary:

> The immeasurable height
> Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
> The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
> 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 wayside
> 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
> 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.
> (239–241, ll. 624–640)

The passage is full of paradoxical juxtapositions which express truth. The first one of these is "woods decaying, never to be decayed"—it expresses the idea of continuity as it is observable in a wood: the individual trees may perish but the wood lives on sustained on the organic material produced during the process of decomposition of dead trees. "The stationary blasts of waterfalls" is another line of this kind, expressing stability and movement at the same time by bringing together the sights and sounds of the scene and expressing the paradoxical essence of the immobile waterfall which is constituted by the movement of the water. The words "bewildered and forlorn" may equally refer to the "[w]inds thwarting winds" and the travellers experiencing the sublime.

"The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky" is only an experience distorted by the senses, an optical illusion (as streams do not come from the sky—though the ultimate source is precipitation, taking its origin in a long process driven by solar radiation) but it provides Wordsworth with an image which connects earth and sky, an image which is the expression of change and permanence at once. The idea of everything being interconnected is elaborated in the next few lines of the passage: rocks are seen as if they were capable of intelligible communication—"Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside / As if a voice were in them" (241, ll. 631–632); the imperfect

near of the stream and the prefect far of the clouds and Heaven, the opposites of "[t]umult and peace" and "the darkness and the light" are listed to feature as the constituents of an infinite unity: they "were all like workings of one mind, the features / Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree" (241, ll. 636–637). Wordsworth does not stop here, however: he goes on to specify what he sees as the "workings of one mind"—the elements constituting the vision are "Characters of the great Apocalypse", reinforcing the sublime quality of the experience; translated into the language of poetics, they are "[t]he types and symbols of Eternity" (241, l. 639).

The concluding line of this section has a profound rhetoric effect. It echoes Milton's lines: "On earth join all ye creatures extol / Him first, him last, him midst, and without end" (Milton *Paradise Lost*, V. 164–5). In Wordsworth's line "Of first, and last, and midst, and without end" the Miltonian scope is replaced by a different one: Milton's God is exchanged here for "Eternity." Wordsworth's lines are, however, far from being unambiguous: the word "Apocalypse" is generally taken to refer to the vision of the end of the world, and as such it is in sharp contrast with the word "Eternity". The last line contains references to time but the world of Eternity is a world of stasis, where there is no first, no last and so on. The ambiguity also owes something to the syntax of these lines—the referent of the last line is not made clear.

The greatness of the passage seems to lie in its unity as a piece of text, and this unity may be analogous to the one Wordsworth observes in the scene, and consequently in the whole universe. The memorable phrases summing up the paradoxical quality of truth and the attempts he makes to join everything in a cosmic union, and the conclusion of the passage seen as an organic part of the context reads well, even if it seems to escape attempts at word-for-word translation in isolation into common language.

Snowdon

The description of the ascent to Snowdon bears a strategic importance from the point of view of the structure of *The Prelude*: the design of Wordsworth was to keep this episode for the end of the work both in the shorter five-book version and in the extended thirteen- and later fourteen-book version. The original aim of Wordsworth in the episode was to see the sunrise from the top of Snowdon; this, however, is mentioned only once, and it never comes to be fulfilled in the poem. Instead, a different kind of experience awaits the poet, a sudden visionary moment, which may be read as a probable parallel to the 'movement' of the mind. The episode concludes with a long passage on the sight offered to the poet in this visionary moment and even longer passage on the imagination.

The passage describing the ascent of Snowdon begins with a very short reference to the intention of the poet to see the sunrise from the top of the mountain. This expedition is not part of a longer journey: unlike the crossing of the Alps, it is not preceded by any other experience. The introduction part is very short as Wordsworth shortly states his aim and provides some necessary details and the description of the actual climbing begins. Wordsworth narrates the event in his usual manner and the accuracy of physical details provides the reader with the sense of reference. There is a strong emphasis on the darkness against which the experience takes place:

> It was a close, warm, breezeless summer night,
> Wan, dull, and glaring, with a dripping fog
> Low-hung and thick that covered all the sky; ... (511, ll. 11–13)

It is night but the darkness is further enhanced by the fog. They soon become embraced and concealed in the mist; yet it is not only the mist that girts them round but their own minds as well: "pensively we sank / Each into commerce with his private thoughts" (511, ll. 517–518). There is only one incident that diverts attention from their own thoughts: the dog finds a hedgehog and attempts to tease it. Apart from this there are no digressions; the travellers continue their way and Wordsworth goes on with his narrative.

The march upwards is almost a militant one:

> With forehead bent
> Earthward, as if in opposition set
> Against an enemy, I panted up
> With eager pace, and no less eager thoughts. (511–513, ll. 28–31)

Their attention is turned inwards and downwards as they are absorbed in their thoughts and whatever little attention is left is turned towards the ground. The surprise consequently comes to Wordsworth from below though its source is above:

> ...instantly a light upon the turf
> Fell like a flash, and lo! as I looked up,
> The Moon hung naked in a firmament
> Of azure without cloud, and at my feet
> Rested a silent sea of hoary mist. (513, ll. 38–42)

The vision comes as a "flash" and it rises and descends at the same time: he notices the light on the ground but he has to look up to see the whole sight. In the short space of these lines Wordsworth finds the means to connect the earth with the sky, and the description of the whole sight follows.

The fog enwrapping them at the foot of the mountain is transformed into an "ocean", and this ocean stretches out over the landscape to make a

contact with "the main Atlantic". The fog itself turns into landscape with "headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes", and it comes to reign over the real ocean:

> ...the main Atlantic, that appeared
> To dwindle, and give up his majesty,
> Usurped upon far as the sight could reach. (513, ll. 47–49)

Once again, the word "usurp" is used in a situation of crucial importance. The meaning is more palpable here than in other passages: the ocean of the fog is the usurper upon the real ocean, and the word suggests a temporary taking over of power.

The sky, however, shows a difference now: there is no usurpation there, the Moon reigns supreme over the heavenly dominion. From that perspective the ocean of fog looks "meek and silent" but there is a "rift" that disturbs the calm surface. The rift is "[a] fixed, abysmal, gloomy, breathing-place" through which "Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams / Innumerable, roaring with one voice" (513, ll. 58–60). The "breathing-place" renders the ocean as a vast organism but it retains its connection with the inanimate world as well—it allows the roar of the waters to pass through. The "torrents, streams" are waters in constant movement, so Wordsworth's favourite river-image is evoked. The roar of the waters serves another purpose in the passage as well: it connects earth and sky as it is "Heard over earth and sea, in that hour, / For so it seemed, felt by the starry heavens" (513, ll. 61–62).

When the vision is gone, Wordsworth sets out to interpret what he has just seen. The experience appears to him as the manifestation of the divine:

> There I beheld the emblem of a mind
> That feeds upon infinity, that broods
> Over the dark abyss, intent to hear
> Its voices issuing forth to silent light
> In one continuous stream; a mind sustained
> By recognitions of transcendent power,
> In sense conducting to ideal form,
> In soul of more than mortal privilege. (515, ll. 70–77)

All these elements attributed to the 'mind' mentioned echo the qualities associated with the divine. However, some of these may be read as references to the human mind. The human mind is often seen by Wordsworth as a "dark abyss" which requires courage from the one intending to descend into it. The human mind is also capable of recognising "transcendent power", though it is true that only in certain moments. Wordsworth makes the suggestions of this passage explicit a few lines later:

> The power, which all
> Acknowledge when thus moved, which Nature thus
> To bodily sense exhibits, is the express
> Resemblance of that glorious faculty
> That higher minds bear with them as their own. (515, ll. 86–90)

The connection is explicit enough though Wordsworth narrows down the scope of his reference to include only "higher minds".

The special abilities of creation and deep empathy are elaborated in the following lines. There is a general sense of joy for these minds in whatever they see: "Them the enduring and the transient both / Serve to exalt" (515, ll. 100–101). They are ready to give and to receive: "Willing to work and to be wrought upon" (515, l. 104) and they do so in a spontaneous way: "They need not extraordinary calls / To rouse them" (517, ll. 105–106). Wordsworth takes the next step and provides the origin of such 'higher minds': "Such minds are truly from the Deity, / For they are Powers" (517, ll. 112–113). The rest of the passage gives a list of the consequences of this—enumerating all those activities and attributes that follow from the divine origin of such minds.

Conclusions

The two mountain scenes are built up along similar lines: there is a description of the physical journey, there are passages devoted to the sight offered by the places and there are passages dealing with the imagination in an attempt of interpreting the sights. The constructions in the two cases are, however, different: after the accurate description of the journey the construction comes to be changed—it is just the reverse of the Alps passage in the Snowdon episode. In the crossing of the Alps the passage addressed to the imagination comes first and the landscape is treated afterwards, in the Snowdon scene the sight is described first and the interpretation comes later. In the Alps the journey described in details is a downward one, whereas in the Snowdon section it is an ascent—this also indicates the relation of the two scenes concerning the element of vision.

In both scenes there are frontiers to be crossed: these are frontiers in the mind, as it becomes clear by the end of the passages (Rehder 167). There are corresponding external frontiers to these: the Simplon Pass itself in the Alps and the line separating the fog from the clear air above it in the Snowdon episode. In the Alps Wordsworth misses it entirely and is forced to recognise it afterwards, in the Snowdon scene it is noticed but in a moment when it is the least expected—the existence of such a frontier, or perhaps of a frontier at all in such a place, is a surprise in itself for Wordsworth. In the Alps scene the original intention is to cross

the Alps and to experience majestic feelings underway—the overwrought expectations divert the attention of Wordsworth from the scene and the experience ends in a spectacular failure. The Snowdon episode is somewhat more successful though the original aim of Wordsworth is to see the sunrise from the top—and the sudden appearance of the Moon above the clouds on a foggy and dark night surprises him to such an extent that he never returns to his initial concern.

Nevertheless, the frontiers are crossed and Wordsworth is rewarded by visions on both occasions. It is during the descent from the Simplon Pass that Wordsworth confronts the "workings of one mind", and the vision is so profound that he uses four more phrases to complete his thought due to the inadequacy of the language (Rehder 155). The passage is memorable however strong the disappointment was that preceded it. The Snowdon experience is different: it is during the ascent that the vision spreads out in front of him—there are no references in the text as to the relation of the place of observation to the peak of the mountain, the reader only learns that it occurs during their upward walk. The vision is once again haunting and intriguing, leading to the interpretative passage in which Wordsworth identifies the sight with the manifestation of the divine and expands the scope to include "higher minds" as well.

The visions are somewhat different as well. In the passage devoted to the imagination in the Alps episode Wordsworth favours the word 'soul'. Imagination is mentioned only once and Wordsworth excuses himself: the inadequacy of language leaves him no other choice than the word 'imagination'. However, he soon disposes of this word and its context, and substitutes 'soul' for it in the rest of the passage, changing the focus of attention. It is the immortal soul that has its home with "infinitude" and it is the soul which seems to have the essential ability of receiving those flashes of the "invisible world". It is more of a passive recipient though, its activity seems to consist in recognising the moments of divine vision, as "it cannot will itself to power" (Hartmann, 16) to prove its creative force.

The Snowdon passage uses the word 'mind' while 'soul' is not mentioned in the relevant context in this passage, nor is the word 'imagination' used. The only term which may build up a connection between the two scenes is the word 'Power'—"That awful Power" is the expression in the Alps passage, and "For they [minds] are Powers" is the one in the Snowdon text. The 'mind' is active and creative as well as recipient, and the glory of man is transferred over to it from the soul of the earlier part.

What may provide a more profound link between the two episodes is the idea of the mind as an abyss, a dark chasm, which is all the more interesting as a contrast with the positive forms of mountains. In the Alps scene the

"awful Power rose from the mind's abyss", unexpectedly, and as its lodging is an abyss, it is necessarily awful. The Snowdon passage has the "rift" in the ocean of fog which is "abysmal". Rehder mentions the idea of a very strong self-consciousness here: Wordsworth "imagines that what he has seen is the mind thinking about itself" (Rehder 33). The entire landscape of the moonlight vision comes to be interpreted as the manifestation of the divine mind, the landscape is seen as mindscape.

Another link may be the imagery related to clouds: the "unfathered vapour" of the Alps and the fog of Snowdon. In the Alps the imagination rises unexpectedly as a cloud appears in the mountains, enwrapping the traveller, descending unto him. In the side of Snowdon the fog enwraps the travellers and the imagination rises when the fog is left behind. Though in the Alps passage it is present only as an image, as part of a simile, its implications may be of use. In such a way the two passages show a reverse movement; on a more tentative level the "unfathered vapour" which descended on the young Wordsworth in the Alps and obscured his senses to lead him to miss the anticipated experience lifts up in the Snowdon episode to provide him with a truly sublime scene as compensation for the more mature man, yielding *the* vision he was so eagerly yearning for in the Alps.

The mountain-passages of Wordsworth are constructed with the help of a pattern whose constituents are the same in both cases though their order and organisation are different: there is a description of the journey, a description of the sight and a passage devoted to the imagination. The imagination is recognised as a mighty faculty of the human mind since it is capable of receiving visions of the divine. The vision occurs unexpectedly; no conscious effort can bring it about as it becomes clear from the Alps episode; it occurs when it is the least expected—not during the upward part of the journey, not on the highest point but during the descent, in a narrow valley. The Snowdon episode also supports this since instead of the intended sunrise the sudden appearance of the Moon above the landscape wrapped in fog evokes the vision.

The most significant part of these episodes is the vision. The reception of the divine has a very important function for Wordsworth: it communicates the message that the human mind and soul share some aspects of the divine in the universe. The vision is the tool for Wordsworth with which "he can make us understand that the outside world is not outside, but what we are made of".[1]

[1] Carey, J. *Sunday Times* review on Seamus Heaney, reprinted on the back of Heaney's *New Selected Poems 1966–1987* (London: Faber, 1990); the full quotation: "More than

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