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Below in the Depths: MacDonald's Symbolic Landscape

Adelheid Kegler

George MacDonald's work is usually discussed with regard to its Christian message. Its importance in the context of the contemporaneous Symbolist movement has been practically ignored. Yet MacDonald is indeed an outstanding Symbolist author. Both his so-called realist works and his fantasy writings revolve around the central themes of Symbolism: love, death, dreams, and the ideal. His whole work is characterised by typical Symbolist artistic techniques, such as parabolic structures, metaphysically connotated colour-attributes, and by narrative strategies such as allusion and concealment. In addition, it is informed by the motifs of a labyrinthine experience of reality as well as by the presence of a dream-like ideal—both aspects pointing to the reception of Symbolism in the 20th century. MacDonald, who was intensely aware of the literature and art of his contemporaries, should no longer be regarded as a writer isolated from his time.

1. The Cleft in the Clouds

The cloud is a central picture for Symbolism because it represents the aura of the material world, darkening the true reality and surrounding it in a confusing way. On the other hand, the cleft in the cloud stands for the background character of the real world through its dialectic of both covering-up and revealing, and consequently is precisely the characteristic of Symbolism, as in these lines of Soloviev:

Not believing the deceiving world
I fell under the coarse rind of 'thingness'
The immortal porphyry
And recognised the glory of the Godhead. (Knigge 11)

The same theme can be found in John Everett Millais' painting *Dew-drenched Furze* (1889-90). According to Millais, it deals with a scene never before painted, and which would possibly prove itself unpaintable (Millais 213). The title comes from Tennyson's *In Memoriam* (XI, verse 2):

Calm and deep peace on this high world,
And on these dews that drench the furze [...]
Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,

And waves that sway themselves in rest,
And dead calm in that noble breast

Which heaves but with the heaving deep. **[end of page 29]**

Millais understood his painting as an attempt to escape the bondage to reality; “[...], almost uninterpretable [...], moving the viewer in his most inner being” (Wilton 176). This being-moved comes about from the gaze of the viewer being led *out of the depths*, out of the wilderness of the forest, up, not only into a lighter part of the forest landscape, but into those dimensions in which the “cloud” of nature is penetrated by the light of the beyond—an attempt to present the *invisible*.

“What we see is only the reflection of the shadows of that which remains hidden to the eye,” says Soloviev. The painting *Twilight* (1890-95) by Archip Iwanowich Kuindshi (1842-1910), created at exactly the same time as the picture already mentioned, is, as it were, an illustration of this. It depicts a desolate, hilly landscape at the onset of night. A waxing moon surrounded by an opening in the clouds is rising into a cloud still lit by the already setting sun. The dark side of a mountain range reminds one of an ancient monster. A dimly lit path curves upwards crossing another path. It is clear that here too a suggestion of the abundance of various worlds and of their invisible basis is symbolically fashioned.

The saying “there is more to the picture than meets the eye” is particularly appropriate to these characteristic Symbolic paintings. They are introduced here in order **[30] [Note: images not available]** to adjust to MacDonald’s landscapes, which are fashioned by related themes and points of view, as indeed is the whole of MacDonald’s work.

In what follows, Symbolism is understood as a direction in European art during the period from 1850 to 1920. Its concern was to penetrate the superficial character of phenomena, the veil of the world of appearances. Symbolism is manifested beside and in contrast to the realistic and materialistic tendencies of the later 19th century. It spans various media—paintings, sculpture, narrative and lyrical literature—and is also present in the beginnings of psychology, in some scientific pastimes, in the study of religion, and in mythological research. Watts has defined the striving of Symbolism as the “spiritual longing towards [...] something beyond the infinity of the heavens” (Wilton 75).

Essentially, this cosmic sketch relates to the human being—the interest of Symbolist art is expressly focussed on the human being. But the symbol of human existence is the Symbolist landscape. It appears in a technique of presentation that inseparably associates the figures with their landscapes.

The character of such landscape pictures—whether natural descriptions, presentations of atmospheric or meteorological phenomena, townscapes, houses, or dreamscapes—serves symbolically to represent the inner state of the figures. It is customary today to call such landscapes ‘landscapes of the mind.’ This term can express an individual or a universal state of consciousness that is represented by nature. Such a presentation serves as an entry point to the individual or universal understanding of Being.

The mental landscape of the ice-age hunter was manifested in the cave, a symbol of mother earth, as is brought home to us by the paintings in such underground landscapes. The mental landscape of the modern / post-modern human being, by contrast, is marked through the passing of fleeting impressions. The mental landscape of the prehistoric world, through the symbol of animal rebirth out of the Earth-mother, guarantees cyclic return for the human being. The mental landscape of the modern and post-modern human being is a ‘single line,’ without relationship to the depths.

Symbolic landscapes carry dual meaning; they possess both apocalyptic and constant traits. The focus concerns apocalyptic aspects, yet this apocalyptic character must be understood in a specific sense.

From the 14th century onwards the theme of the Apocalypse appears with a tremendous presence. It expresses a widespread fear of the end of the world accompanying the arrival of the modern world (*c.f.* Delumeau 313). The appearance of the plague, the invention of new, powerful technologies, such as firearms, instruments of torture, and other innovations of social and economic changes, produced in the society of early modern times a feeling of being besieged by real terrors. In addition to these, in the further course of the development of modern times “ideological” threats appeared, the consequences of an imperialistic conduct towards the world of life. The shadows of the beings that were literally murdered, or were **[31]** pushed into the no-man’s-land of objectivity, reappeared in the form of concepts, such as “Antichrist, Satan, witches, evil spirits, and so on” (Zinn 15).

These terrors conglomerated into the imagination of an imminent end of the world and a last judgement. Yet, alongside this understanding of the Apocalypse orientated upon a single, linear course of time, a further and much more complex interpretation of the apocalyptic phenomenon became manifest. It can be characterised as “chiliastic” and, under the strong influence of Paracelsus, Boehme and not least Swedenborg, it has fashioned a world-view in romantic and Symbolist art. This continues into the cinematic creations of recent modern times, for example, with David Lynch and Jim Jarmusch.

Compared to the mood of expectation bound to the stream of time—an abandonment to the inevitability of the Apocalypse—through this further view the Apocalypse is revealed from a position attained through rising out of the stream of time: pictorially speaking a ‘vertical’ leaving of the ‘horizontal’ stream of time. Beyond this stream of time, great, trans-temporal constellations open up to the “inner eye,” rising “over the spirit who beholds” (Plotinus, *Enneads* 5. 5.32).

The apocalyptic aura of the end of time arises through the fact that the human spirit leaves behind its participation in time: “something more than the sun, greater than the light is coming” (MacDonald, *Lilith* 256), and, as an effect of its own movement, feels that which *is* as ‘coming.’ The apocalyptic ‘impression’ is further increased with the realisation, through a more comprehensive view of the structure of what is real, of the direct dependence of the outer objects on the spiritual world. This is one of Swedenborg’s essential thoughts. The actual reality of being stands in a ‘convicting,’ ‘judging’ relationship to the world of appearances. Pictorially speaking, this is a ‘glance into the depths.’

Yet, if the possibility of experience of the reality beyond is no longer given through an overwhelming presence of outer phenomena, it is nevertheless present as a presentiment. It can no longer fulfil the function of a signpost, because in a multi-layered labyrinth all indicators lead astray, as, for example, in MacDonald’s late work.

In Symbolist art, especially in the Symbolist landscape, one can observe not only the aspect of an apocalyptic broadening of the experience but also the anticipation of a drifting in the opacity of phenomena. The technical presentation of the Symbolist landscape uses a complex scheme of suggestions as carrier of the message. Consequently such suggestions, relating to a transcendent metaphysical world of concepts, appear singly—or, better put, lonely—in the labyrinth or desert of the world of facts lacking a background. They appear as “dreams that are not from here” (Soloviev: “Once again white daffodils”; Knigge 90), but, on the basis of their architecturally-fashioned function, they can be seen as ‘signals.’ Signals of this kind include certain (unmasked) motifs, symbols, metaphors, word-’fetishes,’ and colour-epitaphs. Especially white, the colour of light, (which can also appear with negative connotation as in Melville’s *Moby Dick*, or with ambivalent meaning, as in Whistler’s [32] painting (*The White Girl*) and azure, the colour of beyond, assume a central meaning. In Watts, with reference to Swedenborg’s motifs, a warm, shining orange-red as the colour of the sunrise plays a special role (*c.f.*

After the Deluge, c. 1885-91).

In connection to Symbolism, George MacDonald's oeuvre has received but little attention. The accustomed way of receiving his prose works, as either mythopoeia or as realistic storytelling that derives from C.S. Lewis, seems seldom to be questioned.¹ Yet an uninfluenced reader cannot easily overlook the fact that MacDonald is a Symbolist author of some standing. And this applies to both the, above-mentioned genres. In addition, his work is penetrated by a significant, partly implicit, partly explicit relationship to Swedenborg's thought-world, and in this too it stands in the context of Symbolism. Consequently, the differences between MacDonald's 'realistic' and 'fantastic' works recede; his oeuvre is seen more clearly as a single complete whole that throughout is concerned with the central themes of Symbolism: love, death, dream and the ideal. Symbolist techniques, such as parabolic structures, the storyteller's method of indicating and holding back, and metaphysically orientated colour-elements serve as pointers which lead out of the labyrinth of everyday existence. None of MacDonald's work foregoes the 'Symbolist mentality' of helplessness towards the darkness of the world and of a relationship to the 'dream of the beyond' in the form of apocalyptic landscapes.

"All visible objects, man, are but pasteboard masks," remarks Captain Ahab in Melville's *Moby Dick*, "but in each event [...] there some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask!" (262). This 'double experience' also manifests in MacDonald's apocalyptic landscapes. In *The Princess and Curdie* there are the enchanted mountains hollowed out into abysses and tunnels, and the King's town of Gwyntystorm with its palace, peopled by scoundrels and traitors. In *Wilfrid Cumbermede* it manifests in the strange blue ice-cave and the threatening labyrinthine way through the hazel-wood; but also in the appearance of the sublime when the mountains Jungfrau and Eiger become visible. *Phantastes*, *Lilith*, *The Wise Woman*, *The Portent*, *Sir Gibbie*, *Donal Grant*, and *Weighed and Wanting* all contain characteristic motifs of Symbolism, as well as the presence of the paranormal, the loading of meaning and the overloading of meaning of the motifs of apocalyptic weathers, as it were of prophetic phenomena 'pointing beyond.'

The core of MacDonald's Symbolic (mental) landscapes is based on Swedenborg's teaching of the Grand Human Being; The Grand Human Being is the appearance in human shape of the divine life, and with it the origin and source of the whole universe as well as the "form of the future community of

redeemed spirits” (Benz 396). Specifically related to the human being, the Grand Human Being is once again both the primal image of each individual spirit-personality and the primal form of the community of all these personalities. This aspect, pointing beyond the element [33] of time—as it were “backwards” to the origin and ‘forwards’ to the trans-temporal aim—is symbolised by MacDonald in the figure of the child. In the rather theoretical picture-language of *The Golden Key* it is the oldest of all human beings: “the old man of the fire,” a naked playing child.

In a stronger, practically-orientated language, this child appears in the figure of Diamond and in the ‘childlike-wise man’ Sir David Cumbermede Daryll, Wilfrid Cumbermede’s uncle. Sir David’s being becomes symbolised in the mental landscape of a traditional farm (30-31). In *Phantastes*, the *Humanity Divine* (Blake’s Swedenborgian vocabulary) shows itself to Anodos’ inner eye as the prophecy of a new humanity organised through love. The purified human being in a new corporeality, a “winged child” (290) in “a floating chariot” (317)² sees before him the new life as a law which appears impossible for the experience of time and space:

that despair dies into infinite hope, and that the seeming impossible there, is the law here! But, O pale-faced women, and gloomy-browed men, and forgotten children, how I will wait on you, and minister to you, and, putting my arms about you in the dark, think hope unto your hearts, when you fancy no one is near! (317)

In the final chapter of *Lilith*, the Grand Human Being is revealed as “the most beautiful man,” first to the eyes of the children and then those of the narrator (Vane) as “great quivering light [...] compact of angel faces”³ and finally to all in the form of their mothers and the inexhaustible abundance of Nature: “all kind of creatures [...] all in one heavenly flash” (*Lilith* 259-60). In the subsequent description of Nature as the mystical wedding of heaven and earth, rock and water, river and fortress town, MacDonald shows the apocalyptic, symbolist landscape that represents the Grand Human Being in the anticipation of eternity.

Phantastes on the other hand shows such a final scene in two separate spheres, an evening sky where feathery clouds drift high above the world and are lit by the red rays of the already-set sun, and a great town in the depths out of which there arise cries of hopelessness and despair (179).

2. “The Dweller in the Innermost,” or “The Evil Uncles”

Under the influence of Swedenborg’s theosophy and mysticism

on the pictorial element in artistic works of the late 18th and the entire 19th century, the accent of the pattern of interpretation of the real world shifted towards human inward experience. Even Kant's theory of knowledge derives from Swedenborg's essential concepts of "the relative, subjective character of space, of time and of the whole mechanically determined order of appearance" (Soloviev 532). But Kant's approach is, of course, much more 'mechanistic' than the interpretations of 'Being' indebted to Swedenborg's thought in writers such as Blake, Coleridge, Schelling and Soloviev. The influence of Swedenborg during the course of the 19th century was to encourage a concentration on the processes taking place in the deepest self of the human being. [34] We first find such processes in distinct philosophical concepts in the work of Kierkegaard. It is perhaps no coincidence that in this thinker the abstraction of his conceptions is interwoven with story elements (as in "Fear and Trembling," "Repetition"; "Crisis" and "Diary of the Seducer" from *Either-Or*). And in similar fashion in *Illness to the Death* he uses a suggestive picture to make concrete the abstractly produced condition of despair.⁴

Symbolist art in its true sense presents such phenomena and processes in mental landscapes pregnant with symbols, or it dialectically connects these landscapes (rock formations, townscapes, and so on) with the protagonist of the work. This is explored below in two examples. Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu unmistakably relates his whole work to Swedenborg's mysticism. George MacDonald, who carried on a lively dialogue with German romantic philosophy and poetry and also with the intellectual and artistic stream of his own time, met pictorial expressions of Swedenborg's philosophy and mysticism in the paintings of G.F. Watts, Rossetti, Millais and Burne-Jones.

The "night, which broods in the deepest interior" (Kierkegaard, *Diaries* 170) is the subject of Le Fanu's *A Story of Bartram-Haugh*. Its full title was originally *Maud Ruthyn and Uncle Silas, A Story of Bartram-Haugh* (1864). It is often read as a Victorian "sensational novel," but this outer impression is misleading; it is concerned with a Swedenborgian parable of hell. Bartram-Haugh, once a splendid manor built in white stone, has become derelict; its facade is stained and overrun by moss, the surrounding park and forest has run wild and in part become sinister. Sinister, too, is the architectural centre, the inner courtyard of Bartram-Haugh. Viewed from a window in the second floor of the house it is:

a small and dismal quadrangle, formed by the inner walls of this, great house, and of course designed only by the architect to afford the needful light and air to portions of the structure.

[...] The surrounding roof was steep and high. The walls looked soiled and dark. The windows lined with dust and dirt, and the window-stones were in spaces tufted with moss and grass and groundsel. An arched doorway had opened from the house into this darkened square, but it was soiled and dusty; and the damp weeds that overgrew the quadrangle drooped undisturbed against it. It was plain that human footsteps tracked it little, and I gazed into that grimed and sinister area with a strange thrill and sinking. (213)

It is not surprising that this “dreary quadrangle of cut stones” (400) makes such an impression on Maud, the narrator. She knows, though not explicitly, that it concerns a murder of years past. Does she feel a presentiment that this place is planned as her grave? Both murders—the one accomplished, the other planned—have been conceived in minute detail by her uncle, Silas Ruthyn. Uncle Silas—who, viewed superficially, appears as an honourable old man with silver hair, wearing a black velvet overcoat—is to deeper sight a “living dead.” Another character from the novel, the Swedenborgian Dr Bryerly, characterises him, in a quotation from Swedenborg’s *Heaven and Hell*, as someone damned “in that state operating [in] an isolation from [35] superior spirits” (232). Even for Maud, who initially idolises him, it becomes increasingly clear that he is surrounded by the ghostly aura of a revenant, one who haunts places from a former life, so that in experiencing his unwholesome gaze she is always reminded of the lines of the Irish poet Thomas Moore (1779-1852): “Oh, ye dead! Oh, ye dead! whom we know by the light you give / From your cold gleaming eyes, though you move like men who live” (256).

Silas’ brother, Austin Ruthyn of Knowl, Maud’s father, appears in the eyes of his daughter “like a portrait with a background of shadow [...] and then again in silence fading nearly out of view” (2). Silas produces the effect of “an apparition drawn as it seemed in black and white” (190). From their behaviour, the brothers appear as opposites, yet the ghostly colourlessness attributed to them makes them both belong to the undead. The pious, pompous Austin and the seemingly religious, demonic Silas are uprooted existences, symbolically represented by the “two great trees, overthrown at last by the recent storm, lying with their upturned roots, and their yellow foliage still flickering on the sprays that were to bloom no more” (182). Yet the desolate inner courtyard with its dirty stone walls and opaque windows symbolises in the clearest way Silas’ “died-off individuality” (Kierkegaard), isolated from life. The strangled light, the overgrown gate, the absence of “human footsteps,”

show the inner courtyard as an inner life that can no longer justify its own existence. The courtyard can no longer allow “the needful light and air” to enter the house. The rank growth of grass and weeds in the courtyard and on the walls points towards an eerie, rank, demonic activity.

This choking, wet, decaying atmosphere offers comparison with Tennyson’s “lonely moated grange,” yet the sadly noble, romantic quality of Tennyson’s “Marianna” is missing. The inner courtyard of Bartram-Haugh manifests a hopeless emptiness and desolate boredom, a place of hell. According to Silas’s plan, it is to become Maud’s burial place. And Maud herself almost succumbs to the fateful bann with which this place with the negative energy of a black hole exerts on her.

Although the inner courtyard of Bartram-Haugh is a place of stagnation, it manifests apocalyptic themes: the dynamic of suction and a movement into the depths. It is, as we have seen, the depths of the grave. The final image of this place that the reader is given is the clanking of a spade digging Maud’s grave. The structure of the suction towards this point has already been shown during the drive to Bartram, a journey into the valley, “descending at a great pace” (182) into a thickly wooded, “narrow valley” (182), and finally with accelerating speed, “almost a gallop” (182), up to a wall with a fantastic iron gate. As the novel demonstrates, a way out of this magic bann, an escape out of this eerie suction, is almost impossible.

Almost twenty years later, in 1883, MacDonald also published an apparent sensational novel in *Donal Grant*. Like Le Fanu’s *Uncle Silas*, it is ‘not what it seems to be.’ The landscape of the protagonist, the manor house, the chapel, and so on, are [36] only the extremities of invisible supernatural realities whose presences make themselves felt in an estranging and threatening manner. Even the construction of the plot corresponds to that of *Uncle Silas* in its main features. It likewise concerns a ‘fateful heritage’—the ownership of Morven Castle with its land—; an ‘evil uncle,’ a drug addict like Uncle Silas; a defenceless heiress, Arctura; and last but not least a room situated ‘in the depths’ which almost becomes her undoing. Yet—in contrast to *Uncle Silas*—in the figure of Donal Grant, a university graduate of farming stock, a saviour arrives to help the Lady Arctura.

Morven Castle, with its labyrinthine architecture, its extended roof-landscape, its subterranean chapel that contains a terrible secret, is a thoroughly fear-provoking place. Yet the reader’s fear never takes on the form of helplessness, subject to disaster and drifting into terror, that a reading of *Uncle Silas* excites. The integrity of Donal Grant’s personality cannot be

mistrusted, so the reader never feels that Arctura is in real, serious danger. Rather it becomes increasingly clear that Donal, the tutor and earlier shepherd, is a Symbolic manifestation of the Redeemer, and Arctura, the 'star-child,' a representation of the human soul on its way to completion. Not for nothing does there wind through the numerous floors of Morven Castle—the labyrinth of the world—a magnificent spiral staircase, of which it is said at the beginning that for the inner eye it makes possible the ascent of the human being to heaven (45). There is also an Aeolian harp, the strains of which reach down through a shaft in the roof into the castle filling it with mysterious music. This music brings courage to Donal and Arctura even when they are 'below in the depths' during their discovery of the castle chapel long walled up and sunk in oblivion. This is the more necessary since the chapel contains the corpse of a woman and her child fettered to the altar (270). The reader guesses that Arctura, too, will be murdered there. She is saved in time by Donal, yet this does not prevent her early death.

The fear underlying this 'sensational parable' (if one can use this term) does not stem from the described circumstances; it is not the fear of panic, horror and terror that is described when the murdered sacrifices are found in the chapel. It is the fear before nothingness. Donal feels it first sitting at midnight in the high stone watchtower of the castle:

Never before had he so known himself! Often had he passed the night in the open air, but never before had his night-consciousness been such! Never had he felt the same way alone. He was parted from the whole earth, like the ship-boy on the giddy mast! Nothing was below but a dimness; the earth and all that was in it was massed into a vague shadow. It was as if he had died and gone where existence was independent of solidity and sense. Above him was domed the vast of the starry heavens; he could neither flee from it nor ascend to it! For a moment he felt it the symbol of life, yet an unattainable hopeless thing. He hung suspended between heaven and earth, an outcast of both, a denizen of neither! [...] Was God indeed to be reached by the prayers, affected by the needs of men? How was he to feel sure of it? Once more, as often heretofore, he found himself crying into the **[37]** great world to know whether there was an ear to hear. What if there should come to him no answer? How frightful then would be his loneliness! (52-53)

Eventually it is the imagination of the light that forcefully rushes on, chasing the shadows with its solar arrows (a Swedenborgian-fashioned picture that

appears again later in *Lilith*), which chases away the “demons of darkness” (*Donal Grant* 55).

If, already in *Donal Grant*, the mental landscape of the Grand Human Being is sketched so explicitly that the work rather represents a parable than a novel, then the mental landscape which MacDonald sketches at the beginning of *Lilith* is the landscape of the archetypal human being before the beginning of time, that is, of the world. It is the soul’s view of the material world before descending into it and involving itself with it. In the context of the Neoplatonic tradition, the story of Vane is the story of the soul ‘traversing the world,’ which begins with an observation, a pausing before the ‘way down’ begins. It continues with an ‘entering’ and a growing ‘involution’ into the material world, freeing itself from it through a turning or reversal. In the fundamentally positive interpretation of this ontological and anthropological basic pattern which MacDonald represents, this turning does not mean that the human being rejects the material world, leaving it behind without changing or enriching it; rather does the human being lead the world on to a higher level, enriched and blessed through his descent. In the *Timaeus*, Plato compares the soul with a reversed tree with roots in the heavens, and whose boughs and branches grow downwards into the world (90 a-b); Plotinus in the *Enneads* 4.8.1, emphasises that the soul’s descent is “necessary for the fulfilment of the whole.” Of course, the world could not be transformed and enriched through the light of the soul unless there existed between both a relationship of Being.

Should we not assume that it was a divine intention that this Nature at first would rise up to the human being, in order to find in him the connection of the two worlds, and that afterwards, through the human being, an immediate transition from the one into the other would come about, so that the growth of the outer world might go on growing without interruption into the inner or spirit-world? (Schelling 37)

According to Swedenborg, nothing exists in the material or spiritual world which could exist outside of the unfolding divine life (Benz 388). MacDonald’s narrator Vane sees the mental landscape before all time. It is a picture: that is, ‘something different from himself,’ but at the same time it is a mirror in which he perceives himself. “Could I have mistaken for a mirror the glass that protected a wonderful picture?” (*Lilith* 7). The moment the mirror ceases to be a mirror and becomes the picture of a landscape into which one steps—with which one becomes involved—then the timeless moment of holding back and observing is over. In *Lilith*, the beginning of time and with it

of history, is the beginning of a story.

MacDonald describes the mental landscape of the archetypal human being as follows: [38]

I saw before me a wild country, broken and heathy. Desolate hills of no great height, but somehow of strange appearance, occupied the middle distance; along the horizon stretched the tops of a far-off mountain range; nearest me lay a tract of moorland, flat and melancholy. (*Lilith* 7-8)

This crowded and compact passage describes with extreme neutrality the monotonous moorland. No brightening colour-words are used, only the most general information is given in the form of the appearances and the positioning of the content in the image. This, for the most part, is in the adjectives “wild,” “heathy,” “strange,” “far-off,” “flat” and “melancholy.” They are used to describe elements of the landscape— “country,” “hill,” “horizon,” “mountain-range,” “moorland”—to which the imagination of the reader can orientate itself, and which point beforehand to the heroic plot: heroic because it is about the daring venture to bring divine light into the natural world. The restriction here of linguistic formations by sound and grammar conveys to the reader an enticement and a challenge to participate in the narrator’s experiences upon observing the picture. It could be best described in Novalis’ term *Die Erwartung*. It is “a wonderful picture,” which hieroglyphically symbolises the deeds of the narration and the meaning of the work.

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Notes

1. See Kegler: "Lina und Lilith" and "Cumbermede."
2. On Swedenborg's imagination of "a thin cloud" as a picture of a spirit or an angel which ultimately represents a human being, William Blake remarks: "Think of a white cloud as being holy, you cannot love it; but think of a holy man within the cloud, love springs up in your thoughts." This is Blake's marginal remark in his copy of Swedenborg's *Divine Light and Wisdom*, quoted in Raine (1.13).
3. This is an explicit reference to Swedenborg. "The universal Heaven which Consisteth of Myriads of Myriads of Angels, in it's universal Form is as a man; so also is every Society in Heaven, as well great as small" (Swedenborg 99 and 105, quoted in Raine 2.204).
4. Regarding the image-quality of the closed room, the hidden door, the lonely place, the monastery and the madhouse in *Illness to the Death*; parallels, arisen out of comparable experiences, can be found in Christina Rossetti's poem "I lock my door upon myself and in the painting of the same title by Fernand Khnopff 1891, Neue Pinakothek, Munich.