

Between Reality and Representation: The Crossing of Boundary in Wordsworth, Kant, and Coleridge

Chia-Jung Lee

Department of Foreign Languages and Literature
70 Lien-hai Road, Kaohsiung 80424, Taiwan
E-mail: chiajungl@mail.nsysu.edu.tw

Abstract

This paper will explore the impact of Immanuel Kant and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, two influential figures in Western philosophy, on William Wordsworth's writing to arrive at a finer understanding of this poet's use of language that includes the intellectual and artistic landscape of his poetry as a function of 18th-century aesthetics. A dominant train of thought extending from German Idealism to British Organicism is concerned with the aesthetic presentation of ideas, whose function is the creation of a world in which "the absolute" can be accessed directly. Kant's core epistemological concept is that the world's rational order is the product of the rule-based activity of "synthesis." While Kant believes that the world is comprehensible in light of our inner synthetic faculties, Coleridge supposes that there are "empirical laws" in

Received July 23, 2018; accepted January 25, 2019; last revised December 22, 2018

Proofreaders: Alex C. Chang, Li-Ting Chao, Tsai Min Fang

nature. However, the “empirical laws” of the *Dinge an Sich* challenge our mind’s desire to encompass them. Within Coleridge’s organic whole, there is a dynamic play of fragmentary forces, and this ironic pattern of the fragmentary and the whole strongly influenced Wordsworth’s writing. My study will thus attempt to clarify the more perplexing problem of the nature of Wordsworth’s interaction with nature. Here the fragment “replicates” the whole on the basis of its fragmentary totality. This problematic reflexive mode of “the literary absolute” invites further exploration. My study, then, aims to provide a fuller understanding of how, in the context of aesthetic idealism, Wordsworth engages with the problem of presenting new, exciting, challenging ideas and emotions in his poetry while at the same time expressing a profound sense of loss.

Key Words: Kant, Coleridge, Wordsworth, aesthetic idealism, the Literary Absolute

I. Introduction: German Aestheticism and Romantic Idealism

In the act of writing, William Wordsworth incessantly engages in an introspective project of self-formation in the wake of the French Revolution and questions the value of his work as a shared and communicable experience with the social community. In the Prospectus to *The Recluse*, Wordsworth claims that his poetry is “On man, on Nature, and on human life, / Musing in Solitude” (1958: 30). Concerning such a picture of man, nature and human life, Wordsworth confesses to James Tobin in one letter in 1798: “I contrive to convey most of the knowledge of which I am possessed. My object is to give pictures of Nature, Man, and Society” (as cited in Wordsworth, 1967: 212). In this letter, an emerging conflict between “the knowledge of which I am possessed” and “pictures of Nature, Man, and Society” exists with the word “contrive,” which clearly indicates the poet’s baffled awareness of the incongruity between his own inner thoughts and their communicability with his readers. This disconcerting sense of incongruity haunts Wordsworth’s attempt to “convey” and “give pictures of” what he intends to express in writing—with language as a medium of expression.

Language is conventionally viewed as a formative force in the construction of thought and the expression of feeling. This paper seeks to examine how, within a German Romantic philosophical context, Wordsworth’s view of language is established in relation to the theories of language of Immanuel Kant and Samuel Taylor Coleridge and in what ways Wordsworth deviates from their philosophies and develops his own vision of the function of language.

The purpose of this paper is to assess the significance of Wordsworth’s writing, which manifests an aspect of its intellectual significance in the aesthetics of the eighteenth century, and engages with the main train of thought concerning the aesthetic presentation

of ideas in the context of western philosophies from Kant's German Idealism to Coleridge's Organicism.

This paper argues that Wordsworth's poetic representations of nature and the imagination differs from the aesthetic ideas of Kant and Coleridge primarily in his very awareness of language's power to label and differentiate. In this sense, locating Wordsworth's writing between reality and representation provides us a means of observing the complexity with which Wordsworth's language works to construct, but also problematize, his encounters with both nature and the imagination. In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth's writing of the pivotal years of the French Revolution very much influences his poetic representation of the world. Wordsworth's response to the anxieties generated by the Revolution also involves re-writing his revolutionary experience. This leads to further fragmentation and a multiplicity of identification, especially in the conflict between contradictory ideas of "liberty" as a creed of nature, and "individualism," which divides man from nature. Wordsworth's poetry both relates to, and resists, the specific events immediately surrounding its composition—rather than just the mere philosophical questions of living in historical time. Indeed, Wordsworth's historically informed sense of his poetic project changes in response to the writing of the revolutionary experience and that he is thus forced to rethink his own understanding of the language for any poetic project that comes upon his continual formation of the mind. This, in turn, leads to a larger discussion of Wordsworth's understanding of how language works in his poetic project.¹

¹ Tim Miles offers a detailed account concerning this historical event and its influence on Wordsworth's faith in philosophy: "As the Revolution slid into Terror and ultimately war, however, Wordsworth came to doubt the basic tenets of the philosophy that had underwritten its ideals. As Peckham writes, the aftermath of Revolution 'shattered his faith that a solution to moral difficulties could be found in the study of the empirical world'—a faith that Kant had already undermined by arguing in the *Critique of Pure Reason* that reason, in the absence of sensation and imagination, was incapable of making sense of human experience" (2009: 63).

It is claimed that Kant “opens up the possibility of Romanticism” (Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, 1988: 29). Indeed, Kant’s analysis of how we perceive and “know” the world had a strong influence on Coleridge, and indirectly on Wordsworth. It is from Kant’s transcendental philosophy that Coleridge develops the key ideas of his own aesthetics. In reading Kant, he comes to realize that “freedom . . . could be known . . . In addition, the fact that a being belonging to the world of the senses also belongs to the supersensible order, was positively known” (Park, 1968: 336). For them, the metaphysical realm in which the mind can exert its freedom of will is “known” and thus “accessible.” While Kant thinks there is essentially a difference between “the world of the senses” and “the supersensible order,” Coleridge holds that these two realms are interrelated and reflective of each other. The major difference in their thoughts is the role given to reason. “[Coleridge’s] departure from orthodox Kantianism takes its bearings on the subject of the ideas of reason”; “Coleridge goes far beyond Kant in granting the ideas a constitutive rather than a merely regulative function” (Armstrong, 2003: 68). For Kant, pure practical reason is for apprehending objects. However, “the knowledge which Coleridge required was an intuitive knowledge wherein the role of practical reason was to furnish an intuition rather than a law . . . [Coleridge’s reason is] a higher reason capable of intuiting ideas as real not merely regulative” (Park, 1968: 336).² Coleridge asserts a more active and productive role for reason that “can [intuit] ideas as real.” The real world appears to him as symbolic of the mental world that shapes and forms the phenomenal reality. For him, the act of naming is to establish the reality of an object. “Words,” Coleridge asserts, “are living powers, not merely articulated air” (1978: 249). He believes that language is endowed with life and generative power as are plants. In his view, words represent relations—relations between

² Roy Park also says that “In Kant, the ideas are assumptions. For Coleridge . . . they were intuited as real” (1969: 365).

the mind and perceived objects—rather than merely ideas or objects. “Language is framed to convey not the object alone, but likewise the characters, mood and intentions of the person who is representing it” (1975: 263).³ There is always a bond between words and inner thought in Coleridge’s view of language, which develops a symbolic relationship and is constantly in an organic process of becoming.

Wordsworth’s writing, influenced by German Idealism, nevertheless views language as “a counter-spirit” (1974a: 84).⁴ While words are an all-empowering force for idealists, Wordsworth thinks that words not only obscure his feelings but also make it impossible for him to meaningfully structure his thought. In writing, reality is lost because “meaning becomes grounded in language” (Roberts, 2006: 365). Wordsworth’s use of language is constantly haunted by what it cannot name. This unnameable condition is the realm of reality that is beyond and excluded by language. The Romantic idealist vision of the world is caught in the desire to contain what cannot be included, and the desire to represent the unrepresentable. Wordsworth is foremost a poet of feeling, and in his act of writing, he always seems to try to make what he feels does something. He wants to be “a man speaking to men” about his intense feeling, his “amplitude of mind” (2010b: 70); as he claims in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, a poet is “a man endued with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul” (72).

³ As Coleridge also claims that poetry “provide[s] a symbolic expression of the ideal understanding of ‘the natural Man’ which science, political theory and religion all desire” (as cited in Hamilton, 1983: 132).

⁴ Frances Ferguson points out that “The language of Wordsworth’s epitaphs . . . would remind him that the linguistic incarnation of thought in an epitaph has not corresponded to a fixed incarnation for the deceased or for the poet and his . . . own incarnation is not absolute. Through the contraries of the epitaph’s incarnation and the fact of human de-incarnation, language skirts the hollowness of becoming a counter-spirit which would wed a man too straitenedly to the outward from which he must lose” (1977: 34.) Here, Kathleen M. Wheeler suggests a similar idea: “Language, then, is, in Heidegger’s terms, the house of being, not a tool for expressing being” (1993: 126).

To Wordsworth, “Poetry is the image of man and nature” and “all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” (73, 82). However, language itself can never fully deliver his feeling and thoughts. In the attempt to make language do something for his feeling, language itself turns out to do something else on its own. This paper attempts to show that the uncontrollable power of language continuously baffles the poet, and Wordsworth’s poetry embraces the bewildering and conflicting nature of language that brings about a suspension between reality and representation.

Numerous studies have explored this disturbing view of language in Romantic representations. My study can be read as building on, as well as departing from, the work of all these critics. Through “timely utterance,” Wordsworth hopes to regain his spiritual communion with nature and to reestablish a corresponding continuity between the utterances of his past self and the words of his present writing. This is Geoffrey Hartman’s notion of “word-wish,” which, for him, “may be useful for a future reflection on the relationship of wish, speech act, and text, especially when the text is poetic or visionary” (1987: 106). However, as Hartman goes on to state, this kind of “timely utterance” articulates “nothing but the voice of [its] wish” (1979a: 170). This kind of “wish” can never be fulfilled by a “speech act,” and that is constantly subverted by “text” in *The Prelude*. As Hartman puts it, “to utter things in a timely way is the ideal situation, of course; yet Wordsworth usually represents the ideal in its wishful or miscarried form” (1987, 157). In comparison with Harman’s more negative view on Wordsworth’s writing, Andrew Bennett offers a more constructive suggestion for our reading of the poet. Bennett thinks that we should read poetry as “a certain experience of the poet, a certain way, or certain effect, of “feeling” (2007: 108). He states in *Wordsworth Writing* that “the exemplary Wordsworth is Wordsworth in the act of composition, the writing poet,” and that “the composition of William Wordsworth, the composition of Wordsworth as he composes, in composing, is the haunt and main region of his song” (6). My study

takes one of its major cues from Bennett here, and aims at a greater understanding of Wordsworth's "composition of Wordsworth as he composes."

Bennett points out that in Wordsworth we can see "the complex, imbricated and conflicted relationship between invention and inscription" (2007: 148). My discussion explores the interpretative possibilities opened-up by this claim by investigating how Wordsworth's self-formation is developed as "a representation of [his] mind in the act of creation" (108) resisting but also acknowledging and to some extent embracing the "counter-spirit" of language. However, while Bennett asserts that "the 'loss' of Wordsworth's autobiographical poems may be conceived of as a loss of—a loss constituted by—writing," (174) my own reading will suggest that Wordsworth uses precisely this sense of loss inherent to all writing to intimate the presence of the self lost, to communicate a self that exists in constantly changing relationships with a range of "external stimuli," including language. For Wordsworth, our relationship with externality is constituted by exactly that "noncoincidence that constitutes subjectivity" (152) in writing, so that writing, paradoxically, can and does represent self (the mind), though not through description. In Daniel Hoolsema's view, the most powerful force that comes to counteract "the Romantics reach for the fruit Kant forbade them"—the unimaginable and incognizable objects of reality—is "the force of existence;" as he defines it, "this is the force of existence, which is the coming into presence of being that takes place by withdrawing itself from presence, by absenting itself from any will to presence or system" because of its unrepresentable nature (2004: 853).

However, I suggest that none of these scholarly discussions on the issue concerning "question of literature" sufficiently acknowledge the extent to which Wordsworth recognizes that the representation of the relationship between the mind and the world is to be created in the *ongoing* act of writing, as manifested through his obsessive textual engagement with time and language. And, as

mentioned, it is his understanding of the power of language to label and differentiate that establishes the difference in his aesthetic engagement from those of Kant and Coleridge.

It can be said that Kant lays the foundation for the blooming of transcendental idealism. He insists, “We may content ourselves with having established the fact that we do possess and exercise a faculty of pure *a priori* condition” (1990: 3-4). In his epistemology of the world, he says: “We have not here to do with the nature of outward objects, which is infinite, but solely with the mind, which judges of the nature of objects, and, again, with the mind only in respect of its cognition *a priori*” (16). The mind is believed to be “a faculty of pure *a priori* condition” which is the only means of cognition that we use to judge natural objects. In a train of thought extending from German Idealism to British Organicism, objects as portrayed in literature are regarded as mind-dependent. That is, the world can be consciously shaped by the subjective mind. Furthermore, truth is supposed to be established by the mind. Kant’s influential epistemology of the world proposes that the mind imposes its concepts upon external objects and thus forms the world based on what it has already placed in it. “It is [Kant’s] fundamental moment of freedom in the act of cognition itself . . . that opened the door to the idealist system of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, and that so profoundly affected Coleridge” (Schlutz, 2015: 501). Kant is a pivotal figure that established the evolving train of speculations from German philosophy of aestheticism to Romantic Transcendentalism.

The core concept of Fichte’s theory is “the pure I” (the bare concept of subjectivity). In the view of Fichte, “the practical power is the innermost root of the I” and “our freedom itself is a theoretical determining principle of our world” (1982: 242). He claims: “the whole enterprise of the human spirit issues from the imagination, while the imagination cannot be grasped save through the imagination itself” (250) and thus establishes his specific

conceptualizations of imagination.⁵ Departing from Kant's "relational landscape", the mind-dependent appearance of which is shaped through man's cognitive sensibility, Fichte builds his philosophy on the pure concept of subjectivity. Succeeding Fichte's Science of knowing, Schellingian Absolute exerts a fundamental influence on Coleridge's philosophical theory in *Biographia Literaria*. Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* explains "how art can 'reconcile the primary, unconscious being of the Absolute with the secondary, conscious activity of the intellect.'" To use Schlutz's words, "One and the same capacity, imagination, is active in both poles of the Absolute (the objective pole and the highest degree of productive power of the perceiving intellect, the Absolute's subjective pole)" (2015: 507). Like Schelling's transcendental deduction, Coleridge's secondary imagination, faculty of analytical reason, "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create" an ideal unity—the Absolute (1975: 167). In the wake of Schelling, Hegel establishes the relationship between the subject and its motivating forces in *Phenomenology of Mind*, asserting: "Self-consciousness exists in itself and for itself, in that, and by the fact that it exists for another self-consciousness" (2003: 104); thus self-consciousness "has before it another self-consciousness; it has come outside itself" (104). This signifies two things. "First, it has lost itself, since it finds itself as an *other* being; secondly, it has thereby sublated that other, for it does not regard the other as essentially real, but sees its own self in the other" (105). According to Hegel, "self-externalization" is to establish the existence of consciousness through the "mediation" of the other (106), which forms a contrast to Schelling's Absolute identity. However, a potential problem raised by these philosophical thoughts on aesthetic epistemology of the world is that much uncertainty still exists about the relationship between the problematic nature of

⁵ After reading Fichte's *Science of Knowledge* in 1801, Coleridge shared his thoughts with Wordsworth.

“imagination” and something that belongs to things in themselves (and thus beyond our cognitive perception) that keeps returning to haunt with a sense of noumenal void.

For Kant, the ground of the relation between objects and representations is that either “the object alone makes the representation possible,” or “the representation alone makes the object possible” (1990: 22). In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth makes a similar statement: “I had a world about me; ‘twas my own, / I made it; for it only liv’d to me” (1991a: 139). This world “made” by the poet has a close bond with him because it is his “own” and “only liv’d to” him. In this sense, Wordsworth’s perception of the world is similar to Kant’s philosophy of transcendental idealism which views the human will as a free agent that creatively shapes the world. As Eve Walsh Stoddard points out: “Despite their difference in culture and mode of thought, Kant and Wordsworth face the same philosophical issues with equal passion. Both reject the materialistic and mechanistic paradigms of eighteenth-century empiricism, both seek an epistemology that recognizes the interdependence of the mind and the external world, and both seek a firm basis for morality” (1985: 32). They both seek to find a way to form an understanding of this world based on the intimate interaction between the mind and the outer world, which, they believe, will ultimately lead to the highest virtue of morality.

A number of studies have investigated the relationship between German idealism and the Romantic idealism of aesthetics. Kathleen Wheeler states in *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism* that, under the influence of German aesthetic theories of synthesis, “Romanticism’s break with the vocabulary and traditions of thinking that governed 18th-century theories of language was essentially an overthrow of dualistic philosophy” (1984: 64). Martella reads Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria* as the biography Coleridge uses to “support his critical speculation on world order and the poetic language that expresses” (1999: 175). Further, he reads *Biographia Literaria* not only as biography but also as “a mythology of the

future.” This way of understanding the world “fulfils the dream of German Romanticism, that of constructing a mythology of the future, albeit only in fragments and always unfinished, as the last horizon of modern historical consciousness, the last hope of grasping a far too quickly changing world” (178). In *Coleridge and German Philosophy*, Paul Hamilton sets Coleridge’s mode of thinking within a German Romantic philosophical context, pointing out, “Coleridge agreed with Kant that ideas of reason were uncontainable within our understanding, but he hollowed those who transformed the regulative effect to which Kant restricted our apprehension of ideas into a sense of their progressiveness and productivity” (2007: 4). Kant’s *Critique of Judgement* bridges the gap between phenomenal and noumenal reality, and Coleridge moves beyond the “regulative effect” of Kant’s aestheticism to ideas that embodied “an infinite power of semination.” According to Hamilton, “Coleridge’s autobiography in its major gestures continues, in Hegel’s terms, to be Spirit- directed rather than a phenomenology of self-consciousness” (35). Nevertheless, as Martella has reminded us in his reading of *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge’s spirit directed “mythology of the future” remains forever “unfinished”, a spiritual journey that can never be enclosed in the imagined unity. Then, Nicola Trott reveals a correlation between German aesthetic theorists and Romantic poets that has been established on the idea of the sublime: “The sublime . . . has been conceived in various and often contradictory ways: as God-dependent (Coleridge) and God- denying (Shelley); as physiological (Burke) and transcendental (Kant)” and offers an insightful account on the evolving conceptions of the sublime: “It has been seen as invoking unity or refusing closure; as inhering in the object or the mind; as involving the senses or referring to reason; and as diminishing or magnifying the human subject” (1998: 82). In an analysis of these various modes of understanding the world, William Ulmer shows that Wordsworth’s most emphatic affirmations of perceptual receptiveness occur in poems and manuscript fragments

restricted to his 1797–1799 enthusiasm for the “one life,” and they lapsed with the lapsing of that enthusiasm” and concludes that “Coleridge’s poem . . . would appear to privilege the constitutive power of the mind (Kant) and demote the perceptual mediation of inner and outer (Wordsworth)” (2009: 195-196). This positioning of the three figures in Western philosophy of aesthetics further reveals their intricate and mutual influencing relationships.

Studies undertaken to analyze and elaborate on the Romantic literary forms of presentation, nevertheless, show that language itself possesses more sophisticated power than that seen by German idealists. The determinability of the aesthetic and literary presentation of ideas by philosophy has long been a debatable issue in Western thought. De Man speaks of the problem of German idealism: “Both Kant and Hegel cannot complete and close off their systems because they cannot ground their philosophical discourses on principles internal to these systems. In the very attempt to ground or validate the aesthetic, both must have recourse to factors and functions of language that *disarticulate* the aesthetic and its linking or mediating role” (1996: 5). The “principles internal to their [philosophical] systems” are the transcendental claims of totality and ideality, which, nevertheless, have to be presented through aesthetic formulations that “have recourse to factors and functions of language.” The working of language opens up the supposedly complete system of philosophy in its very act of “*disarticula[tion]*.” That is, the counter-acting force of language fundamentally subverts the principles of the idealist philosophical system. It is this contradicting nature inherent in western aesthetic theory that drive Samuel Fleischacker to claim: “At best, Kant owes us an explanation of how the linguistic mode of art could be precisely the one that offers ‘a wealth of thought to which no linguistic expression is . . . adequate’; at worst, he is simply contradicting himself” (1996: 117).

A seminal study in this area, *The Literary Absolute*, claims that German aesthetics “pose the question of literature as the question of the presentation of philosophy, or in other words, . . . as the

question of the aesthetic presentation of the idea along lines determined by philosophy” (1988: x). In response, Andrzej Warminski’s “Returns of the Sublime: Positing and Performative in Kant, Fichte, and Schiller” offers probably one of most comprehensive analysis of this “question of literature”: “the Kantian critical system can account for the principles of all kinds of judgments . . . but what it *cannot* account for in terms internal to the system and its critical, i.e., transcendental, principles is the *act* and positing power that put the critical, judging subject into place, again, in the first place. All it can do is push its self-critical self-reflexivity to a limit-point at which it needs to repeat its ungrounded grounding act over and over again, like in some kind of stutter or syncope” (2001: 968). Establishing on Samuel Fleischacker’s and Andrzej Warminski’s criticism of Kant’s ungrounded aesthetic philosophy, Daniel J. Hoolsema further criticizes the ways in which “the Romantics strive to overcome the limit into which Kant repeatedly runs . . . they set their sights “outwards” and work to grasp the infinite in the finite, the supersensible in the sensible. Unity, then, appears as it must, in the form of multiplicity, which is to say, as fragments of a whole forever in the process of completion” (2004: 852). In my view, an alternative interpretation can better illustrate the Romantics’, particularly Wordsworth’s, writing in relation to Kant’s theory. As this paper attempts to show in the following sections, Wordsworth’s writing in the genre of fragment is more an engagement with “the limit into which Kant repeatedly runs”; it is by continually testing the boundary of the limit that the poet composes a fragmented whole “forever in the process of completion.”

In *Romantic Organicism* Charles Armstrong even claims, “One of the major ironies of the *Biographia Literaria* is, of course, that it denounces the fragment in the very act of manifesting it” (2003: 55). An everlasting sense of ambiguity exists in this very bewilderment embedded in a system of “self-reflexivity” which has been “ungrounded” by an accompanying “fragment”. A succeeding study

from Daniel J. Hoolsema remarks: “The name the Romantics give the event designates precisely what is *inessential* about their experience, because it implies that its essence is subject-based productivity” (2004: 860). The Romantics’ writing is mainly “subjective-based productivity.” Once put in words, the represented objects are immediately removed from their original state, which indicates their changed essence in literature and writing’s “*inessential*” presentation of them. Thus there is always a “void” in the represented objects and it needs to be filled through a literary sign—which “is always the supplement of the thing itself” (Derrida, 1976: 145). That is, literary signs are merely an “*inessential*” “supplement” of real objects. Paradoxically, the only possible presence in writing is taken by literary signs while the represented are forever absent. The above readings, as a whole, support the claim that literature’s “grounding act” and “positing power” are endlessly caught in the reflective play of fragments that come to unground/incomplete the subject. From this perspective, it has been shown conclusively that the “subject-based productivity” is in essence “a will that wills its own actuality” when Being emerges as “the *will to system*” in Jacob Bittner’s latest analysis of the literary absolute (2017: 5). This “willed” self-reflective activity, ironically, is simultaneously denounced by its supplementary fragments.

Wordsworth claims that he can “recognize / In nature and the language of the sense, / The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse, / The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul / Of all my moral being” (2010a: 52). The poet finds in nature and the language that incorporates his sense his “purest thoughts,” and “the guide” of his mind, which evokes “all [his] moral being.” Kant also claims that the human mind, as an agent of transcendental freedom, acts on and unifies the perceived world. In German Idealism, language is not only conventionally thought of as the connection between the mind and the external world, but also viewed as “the aesthetic activity of production and formation in which the absolute might be experienced and realized in an unmediated, immediate fashion . . .

Art realizes an adequate presentation of the Idea, or in other words accomplishes a sensible actualization of the Idea”⁶ The function of aesthetic production, for idealists, is to create and form a world in which “the absolute” can be directly accessed. However, for Wordsworth, the aesthetic ambition to achieve “adequate presentation” of the absolute in philosophy is like a dream of “lawless tales” (1991a: 175) because that aesthetic can never successfully achieve philosophy’s ambition of systematic unity, not to say “a sensible actualization” of it. Language is essentially irreducible to any absolute meaning. As Kathleen Wheeler states, “Language, in philosophizing, becomes self-conscious of its own limitations and character as rhetorical” (1993: 76). This does not deny the existence of Being or Idea, but implies the inaccessibility of them. Language’s “limitations” are exactly its “rhetorical” nature that can never reach the immanent principles of philosophy.

In attempting to make everything adaptable to the mental faculty, Kant’s idealism ignores the facts that the real things external to the mind are essentially an otherness to the mind. Coleridge is much influenced by Kant’s thoughts and develops his philosophies based on Kant’s idealism. Coleridge crosses Kant’s gap between the noumenal and the phenomenal worlds by assigning a more active role to the mind that is able to intuit things as real. As Coleridge claims in *Biographia Literaria*: “The highest perfection of natural philosophy would consist in the perfect spiritualization of all the laws of nature into laws of intuition and intellect. The phaenomena (the material) must wholly disappear, and the laws alone (the formal) must remain”; “Thus the true system of natural philosophy places the sole reality of things in an absolute . . . the absolute identity of subject and object, which it calls nature, and which in its highest power is nothing else but self-conscious will or intelligence” (1975: 146, 155). For Coleridge, the external objects are essentially

⁶ Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester, “Translator’s Introduction,” in Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy’s *The Literary Absolute* (1988: xi).

symbols and reflections of the inner thoughts, and the agent that bridges the two worlds is the living power of language. However, in Coleridge's organic whole, there is a dynamic play of fragmentary forces. It is this very ironical pattern of fragment and whole that constitutes Coleridge's exemplary creative philosophy and causes much influence on Wordsworth's writing.

In this organic system, language takes on an extremely ambiguous role. On the one hand, it is used to be a medium to bring everything into an imagined whole; on the other hand, it turns out to be an otherness, a counteracting force, and even a fragment itself. It is this latter characteristic of language that is most baffling and perplexing to Wordsworth. In the attempts to use language as a medium and, at the same time, to resist its very subversive nature, Coleridge realizes that the philosophical language can never be transformed into literary language. These conflicting thoughts are revealed in his writing, for example, in the appearance of the fictional letter in *Biographia Literaria* and in the final disillusionment of his creative power in "Kubla Khan." The poetical presentation of symbolic relationships in Coleridge's organic system reveals that everything becomes an image, a sign, the referent of which can never be determined because the thinking of identity has been covered by the thinking of non-identity in language. In the organic system, each fragment is contained in the whole in its own identity as a fragment. This is to say that each fragment is both part of the whole and a whole in its individuality. It is constantly in the act of mirroring and duplicating. Ultimately, the totality keeps fading away, and its presence is replaced by the presence of wholes in fragments.

II. Kant's Theory of Transcendental Idealism and Wordsworth's Writing

This section will look at the development and structure of Wordsworthian language in the context of Kantian Idealism. I shall pay particular attention to the concept of the sublime as it plays a

major role in the German Romantic philosophical context. Though there is no clear evidence whether or not Wordsworth has read Kant, it cannot be denied that Wordsworth was more or less influenced by Kant's thoughts through Wordsworth's intellectual interaction with Coleridge. Coleridge is one of major post-Kantian philosophers; as he says in *Biographia Literaria* that Kant's works "took possession of me as with a giant's hand. After fifteen years' familiarity with them, I still read these and all his productions with undiminished delight and increasing admiration" (1975: 84).⁷ Raimonda Modiano points out that Coleridge "managed to turn Wordsworth into a far more faithful disciple of Kant than he was himself" (1985: 129). Nicola Trott also says that "something of the Kantian conflict (of attraction-and-repulsion) and transition (from limitation to limitless) is continuously present in Wordsworth" (1998: 78). These statements indicate the influence of Kant's thought on Wordsworth's writing.

Kant is generally viewed as the major figure in the establishment of the foundation of German Idealism. The core concept of his epistemology of the world is that the rational order of the world is a product of the rule-based activity of "synthesis." This consists of conceptual unification and integration carried out by the mental concepts of "categories of the understanding" operating on the perceptual manifold within space and time. Kant views space and time as concepts of sensibility that are *a priori* necessary conditions for any possible experience. That is, these two concepts are forms of sensibility existing in the mind as the precondition of any experience. As Kant demonstrates in his *Critique of Pure Reason*,

⁷ "i.e. since 1800. It is probable Coleridge began to read Kant during his nine months in Germany (September 1798-July 1799). But his final conversation to Kantian ideas is not apparent until two years later in a letter to Poole (16 March 1801): 'I have not only completely extricated the notions of time and space; the doctrine of association as taught by Hartley . . . ' Cf. *Notebooks*, 1517n." This quotation comes from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* (1975: 84, note 1).

By synthesis in the most general sense, however, I understand the act of putting different presentations together with each other and comprehending their manifoldness in one cognition. . . . The synthesis of a manifold . . . is what first brings forth a cognition . . . [it] is that which properly collects the elements for cognition and unifies them into a certain content. (1990: 110)

The act of synthesis brings different elements together so that they can be completely conceptualized. Wordsworth's statement that "in all things / I saw one life, and felt that it was joy" (1991a: 134) can be seen as following this synthetic consciousness of "transcendental apperception" (Kant, 1990: 107).

Kant believes that it is possible to have metaphysical knowledge of the world not directly derived from empirical experiences because our mind supplies the conditions of space and time to experienced objects: "we ourselves bring into the appearances that order and regularity in them that we call nature, and moreover we would not be able to find it there if we, or the nature of our mind, had not originally put it there" (125). Similarly, Wordsworth says in *The Prelude*:

The mind of Man is fram'd even like the breath
And harmony of music. There is a dark
Invisible workmanship that reconciles
Discordant elements, and makes them move
In one society. (1991a: 115)

This metaphysical relation between "the mind of Man" and "discordant elements" is similar to Kant's perspective in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which subvert the traditional thinking that the mental faculty of knowledge is in mechanical accordance with its perceived objects. Here, Andrew Ward gives a detailed explanation of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*:

First, that the dimensions in which the objects of our senses are located—namely, in space and time—are dependent on

us (are, in fact, properties of our mind); and second, that the fundamental laws governing the behaviour of the objects of our senses are dependent on concepts existing innately in us . . . the whole *framework* by means of which objects of the senses can be known—the sensuous *forms* in which they are given (space and time) and the basic dynamical *laws* governing them—will be contributed by us. (2006: 7-8)

This paragraph places particular emphasis on the supreme power of our mental faculties that are able to form “the whole *framework*” of the world. Kant thinks that the objects of our sensible knowledge are to accord with our sensible faculties of knowledge.⁸

Wordsworth’s phrase “the mind of Man” possesses the “properties [space and time] of our mind” in which “the objects of our senses are located” and “the fundamental laws governing the behavior of the objects of our senses.” In this sense, the mind is able to form the conceptualized world into “one society” of “[reconciled] discordant elements.” However, my study will particularly examine Wordsworth’s view of the power in the mind, which he refers to as “a dark / Invisible workmanship.” It seems that Wordsworth’s phrase here places a shadowy and vague veil that obscures the cognitive faculty of mind that can be associated with Kant’s *a priori* sensibility. This “workmanship” is seemingly in accordance with the Kantian analytical categories of understanding which are “the most basic concepts by which we have the capacity to think any rule-governed connections at all between representations given in a sensible form of intuition” (Kant, 1990: 50). These categories of understanding “existing innately in us” presuppose the systematic unity of nature. However, it is worth investigating why Wordsworth

⁸ Concerning the word “sensibility,” Kant explains that “the capacity for receiving representation through the mode in which we are effected by objects, is called sensibility. Be means of sensibility, therefore, objects are given to us, and it alone furnishes us with intuitions . . . pure intuition, which exists a priori in the mind, as a mere form of sensibility, and without any real object of the senses of any sensation” (1990: 21-22).

particularly describes this mental faculty as being capable of “a dark / Invisible workmanship.” Alternatively, it may be said that the poet is creating a sense of ambiguity here with regards to the location of this “workmanship.” On close analysis, there seems no direct connection between “the mind of Man” and the “workmanship.” He merely states that “there is” a “workmanship” doing the action of unification. Wordsworth’s writing here reveals his more ambiguous view of the human mind than Kant’s, indicating a subversive and irregulative power at work in Romantic imaginative epistemology of the world.

Kant claims: “In the sequence therefore we will understand by *a priori* cognitions not those that occur independently of this or that experience, but rather those that occur *absolutely independently of all experience*” (1990: 2). *A priori* judgments of space and time are properties of the mind that apprehend sensations and set mental preconditions which determine the relationship between appearances in the external world. These sensible intuitions—forms of sensibility existing in the mind—are independent of the influence of any external empirical object. The core argument of the Kantian metaphysical deduction of the categories is that “the same function that gives unity to different representations in a judgment also gives unity to the mere synthesis of different representations in an intuition, which, expressed universally, is called the pure concept of the understanding” (79).

Coleridge here holds a similar view of “a purposive or teleological causality” (1975: 232) in his epistemology of the natural world. He says, “The transcendental laws of nature, without which there could be no objects of experience (appearances) at all, are contributed by us,” and, at the same time, he also thinks there are determinable empirical laws in their systematic unity:

the empirical laws are dependent on the content of the given appearances, not on us, and it is therefore a presupposition of *our* unified experience of the appearances according to empirical laws that these laws should form a system that is

comprehensible to us. (229)

Coleridge thinks that the act of knowing depends on “a presupposition of *our* unified experience of the appearances.” While Kant believes that the world is comprehensible because of our inner synthetic faculties, Coleridge supposes there are “empirical laws” in nature which need to be taken into account as well. Coleridge’s use of “*our*” and “*us*” shows that the preconditioned mental faculty of unity, like Kant’s *a priori* intuitions, claims universality. The question is how we can determine the “*determinable* empirical laws” (my italics) that are “dependent on the content of the given appearances” rather than on our cognitive faculties. This is also the question existing in Kant’s epistemology of the world, in which it is claimed the outer appearances are to be shaped by mental intuitions. These “empirical laws” of things-in-themselves are still beyond the control of our comprehension and thus challenge the mind’s desire to encompass it in our cognitive system.

Kant, then, tends to view external appearances with his “inner sense” and thus to transform them into “objects of the sense.” Nevertheless, this is the point where Wordsworth’s idea deviates from Kant’s. The Kantian concept of space and time is the mental precondition of the cognition of the world. On the contrary, for Wordsworth, space and time are not merely inner intuitions of mind, they also belong to things-in-themselves, the objects that are beyond human conception. His idea of time is bordering on two levels—a conceptual assumption of time and one’s consciousness of time in physical experiences. As the poet asks:

how could there fail to be
Some change, if merely hence, that years of life
Were going on, and with them loss and gain
Inevitable, sure alternative. (1991a: 295)

In the lapse of time, he believes there will surely be “some change” and that “loss and gain” are “inevitable” and “sure alternative.” In looking back, Wordsworth finds that there is an inevitable change

in his consciousness of time. That is, there is surely a change in one's consciousness in experiencing the concept of time.

The poet finds that in his memory

so wide appears

The vacancy between me and those days,
Which yet have such self-presence in my mind
That, sometimes, when I think of it, I seem
Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself
And of some other Being. (125)

It is this "wide" "vacancy" between the present and past days that perplexes Wordsworth. In the forward-moving flow of time, he is aware of the inevitable change in the attributes of the previous moment. These earlier moments can never be recaptured and a "vacancy" emerges in his physical experience of time, in which there are different selves existing in each moment. Ambiguously, however, "those days" in the past "yet have such self-presence in my mind." Even though he himself once lived in those past moments, the recalled consciousness appears as otherness ("some other Being") to his present consciousness. This otherness, ambiguously, is conceptually in continuum with his present self, but yet discontinuous with his present consciousness. Paul de Man points out that "what we call time is precisely truth's inability to coincide with itself" (1979a: 78). Whenever we attempt to recollect the moment in the past, temporal transience already presupposes temporal distance and the impossibility of any coincidence of two moments. In this sense, the reality of truth, through representation, have been made inaccessible. Kant says, "Different times are merely parts of one and the same time" (1990: 28), but Wordsworth's writing is also engaged with his different consciousnesses that exist in "different times" that are "parts of one and the same time." The Kantian claim of eternity and unchangeable substance in time is based on a conceptual level while Wordsworth's consciousness of time brings personal experiences into its encounter with time and thus forms a more dynamic vision of time as a concept existing in

phenomenal reality rather than merely as *a priori* mental intuition.

Kant's concept of transcendental freedom of human also exerts a fundamental influence on Wordsworth's writing. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant moves beyond the sensible experience of the world because he thinks, "Though our experience begins with experience, it by no means follows that all arises out of experience" (2010: 1). For him, to fully explain everything in the spatio-temporal world requires two causal grounds: a causality of nature (the apperception of the world with a precedent natural cause) and a causality of freedom. In the causality of freedom, as illustrated in *Kant: The Three Critiques*,

A cause must exist which is *not* itself subject to a prior determining cause, but is, rather, that through which a series of natural events is set in motion. Such a cause would possess what Kant calls an "absolute spontaneity": it must be of *itself*, or be *self-caused*. This cause, since it cannot be preceded by an earlier cause by which its causality operates, while it makes possible the experience of change in the spatio-temporal world, possesses *transcendental freedom*. (Ward, 2006: 145)

Unlike *The Critique of Pure Reason* based on the causality of nature, *The Critique of Practical Reason* is founded on the causality of freedom, which gives rise to action spontaneously without any "prior determining cause." This transcendental cause itself changes the apprehended world. For Kant, the genuine agents in the world possessing this "*transcendental freedom*" are human beings. He thinks that the human will, determined as a transcendently free agent, follows a moral law in the process of formulating a subjective principle of action. Not only sensuous impulse but also moral law can influence human will. This moral principle motivates pure reason and determines human moral duties. Thus human beings are said by Kant to "possess a will *in so far as that being is capable of acting on the consciousness of rules; and, hence, through the employment of reason*" (2010: 145).

Similarly, Wordsworth states in *The Prelude*:

To every natural form, rock, fruit or flower,
 Even the loose stones that cover the high-way,
 I gave a moral life, I saw them feel,
 Or link'd them to some feeling: the great mass
 Lay bedded in a quickening soul, and all
 That I beheld respired with inward meaning.
 Thus much for the one Presence, and the Life
 Of the great whole. (1991a: 138)

In this paragraph, the mind, instead of apprehending the natural objects through sensory experience, takes on the role of a transcendental free agent that is capable of “[giving] a moral life” to “every natural form.” Rather than seeking a natural explanation of the empirical world, the mind itself causes a series of metaphysical alterations by “link[ing] [natural forms] to some feeling” and thus “all / That I beheld respired with inward meaning” of “moral life.” It is this metaphysical claim of “one Presence, and the Life / Of the great whole” that make our moral experience possible. One point is noticeable here. While Kant thinks that the moral law is to be carried out “through the employment of reason,” Wordsworth forms the whole landscape of “moral life” through feeling (“I saw them *feel*, / Or link'd them to some *feeling*” (my italics)). In this aspect, it can be said that Kantian vision of the world formed by transcendental freedom mainly concerns the idea of reason while feeling shapes the Wordsworthian landscape.⁹ This is also why de Man criticizes Kant’s epistemology, “No mind, no inside to correspond to an outside, can be found in Kant’s scene” (1996: 127).

⁹ As Noel Jackson remarks, “Wordsworth’s plea to the reader to ‘abide independently by his own feelings’ (*LB*, 270) bears a dimension unfamiliar to Kant, for whom truly aesthetic judgments are distinct from judgements made on the basis of feeling” (2003: 122).

Furthermore, Kant claims:

The moral law leads to a practical task that is set by pure reason alone and without the aid of any sensible incentives, namely that of the necessary completeness of that of the first and principal part of the highest good, *morality* [viz. the attainment of a virtuous disposition]; and, since this can be fully accomplished only in an eternity, it leads to the postulate of *immortality*.¹⁰

Thus “Ideas of Reason,” for Kant, are “God, Freedom (of will), and Imagination” (1990: 5), which are not preceded by any natural cause and all involve concepts beyond the bound of physical experiences. In this sense, we can see that the natural objects presented in the above quotation are not objects of the senses but “natural forms” derived from a practical law that, by means of “a quickening soul,” transforms the world the poet perceives. In this world formed by the free agent of human will, “a quickening soul” is spreading over “every natural form” and everything is instilled with feeling and “inward meaning” of “moral life”—“the life / Of the great whole.”

Concerning “Ideas of Reason”—“God, Freedom (of will), and Imagination,” it is also noticeable that Wordsworth states in *The Prelude*, “in progress through this Verse,” our mind, possessing transcendental freedom, is privileged to participate in “a soul divine”—“a deathless spirit” (1991a: 163). However, my study seeks to unpack the more perplexing problem existing in Wordsworth’s interaction with nature. In the Wordsworthian world formed by the metaphysical play of subjective action,

Nature’s secondary grace,
That outward illustration which is hers,
Hath hitherto been barely touch’d upon,
The charm more superficial, and yet sweet
Which from her works find way, contemplated

¹⁰ Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, Dialectic, Ch. II, Sect. V; 5: 124, quoted in Ward’s *Kant: the three Critiques* (186).

As they hold forth a genuine counterpart
 And softening mirror of the moral world. (1991a: 320)

The human will, the transcendental agent of a practical task, is acting on the moral law here. “The moral world,” through the act of contemplation, is revealed, of which nature is “a genuine counterpart / And softening mirror.” The phrases “a genuine counterpart” and “softening mirror” assigns an active otherness to nature here. The use of “genuine counterpart” indicates the otherness of nature to the mind while the phrase “*softening mirror*” (my italics) shows a possible interaction between the outer and inner world. Wordsworth’s very ambiguous attitude towards nature is different from Kantian idea of the human mind as a transcendental free agent of morality. For Kant, the will is able to make a self-caused change of the outer world, while for Wordsworth, there is a contradiction in the relationship between the mind and nature.¹¹ In Wordsworthian landscape, nature also partakes of the play of mental creation.

Kant’s Third Critique—*the Critique of Judgment*—is an analytic of aesthetic judgment which is intended to bridge his previous two critiques. “It is only the judgment of taste—and, more specifically, when it is applied to the beauties of nature—that can effect the bridging role” (Ward, 2006: 183). Only when pleasure arises from the objects’ forms rather than from the content of real objects can they be regarded as beautiful. In claiming a taste—a feeling—as the determining ground of the judgment of taste, Kant proposes the finality of nature—the ground of an object’s existence—as the bridge between the realms of nature and mental

¹¹ Albert O. Wlecke demonstrates this ambiguous relationship between mind and nature in Wordsworth’s writing: “Wordsworth’s consciousness was a curiously ambivalent and contradictory mixture of the sense of being led (be nature), of the sense of his own loving pursuit (of nature?) and, most strikingly and memorably, of the fearful sense of being pursued—by ‘something’. Perhaps it is his awareness of these riddles of his past state of mind which prompts Wordsworth to say: ‘I cannot paint / What then I was’ (*Prel. II. 75-76*)” (1973: 41).

freedom. As Ward explains,

The existence of these beauties suggests that just as nature, or its ultimate cause, may have produced natural forms merely for the free delight of our cognitive faculties, so nature, or its ultimate cause, may be favourably disposed to our achieving, by the free use of our practical faculty (the will), the highest good. (2006: 201)

In this sense, beauty is the symbol of morality. For Wordsworth, the pleasure derived from beautiful forms in nature makes “the mind of man / A thousand times more beautiful than the earth / On which he dwells, above this Frame of things . . . In beauty exalted, as if itself / Of substance and of fabric more divine” (1991a: 324). The beautiful “frame of things”—similar to the form of natural objects in Kantian judgment of beauty—is to exalt and glorify the mind.

The intensity of the pleasure thus derived depends on the degree of harmony between understanding and the imagination. The beautiful forms in the manifold of representations are able to bring these two cognitive faculties into “harmonious free play,” in which not only can the imagination fully exercise its productive power but the concepts of understanding are capable of relating natural forms under *a priori* intuition. In Kantian transcendental freedom,

There is a noumenal ground for the whole phenomenal world, but that this ground can be conceived as having fashioned nature and its physical laws so that there will arise an abundance of natural forms which, solely as the *by-products* of the physical laws, are capable of putting our cognitive powers into harmonious free play” (Ward, 2006: 218).¹²

¹² On this “noumenal ground,” Kant says, “certain of our cognitions rise completely above the sphere of all possible experience, and by means of conceptions, to which there exists in the whole extent of experience no corresponding objects seem to extend the range of our judgments beyond its bounds. And just in this transcendental or supersensible sphere, where experience affords us neither

Though these forms of beauty in nature are “the *by-products* of the physical laws,” they are the ground on which nature and human free will are closely connected. The judgment of beauty brings our “cognitive powers” beyond the realm of conceptions and possible experiences to the unified interplay of nature and the human mind based on “a noumenal ground,” in which understanding and imagination are in harmonious play. This bridging role of the finality of nature, for Kant, is the ground of an object’s existence. In this sense, Wordsworth’s phrases in his encounter with the natural objects—“all thinking things, all objects of all thought” (2010a: 51)—are similar to Kant’s idea here. In this aspect, my study particularly examines how this concept of the finality of nature is incorporated into Wordsworth’s presentation of the world.

The poet writes in *The Prelude*:

O happy state! What beauteous pictures now
 Rose in harmonious imagery—they rose
 As from some distant region of my soul
 And came along like dreams; yet such as left
 Obscurely mingled with their passing forms
 A consciousness of animal delight,
 A self-possession felt in every pause
 And every gentle movement of my frame. (1991a: 160)

In this “happy state,” the productive imagination transforms the natural world into “harmonious imagery” of “beauteous pictures.” This harmonious play of natural forms comes from the poet’s inner union of mental faculties based on, in Kant’s words, “a noumenal ground”—“some distant region of my soul.” This poetic presentation of the world has been formed by a subjective cognition that intends to bring everything into “a self-possession felt in every pause / And every gentle movement of my frame.” Now the world

instruction nor guidance, lie the investigation of Reason, which . . . we consider far preferable to, and as having a far more elevated aim than all, that the understanding can achieve within the sphere of sensuous phenomena” (1990: 4).

he sees is not the physical world perceived by “bodily eyes” but his inner noumenal world—“what I saw / Appear’d like something in myself, a dream, / A prospect in my mind” (1991a: 133).

These “beauteous pictures,” though presented as a harmony of imagery arising from the mind, are “obscurely mingled with their passing forms.” These “passing forms” can be supposed to be forms of the real objects in the external world that the “beauteous pictures” in the mind fail to harmonize—they are just “obscurely mingled.” It is still not easy to cross the boundary between the inner and outer worlds in Wordsworth’s writing. At least, for Wordsworth, the act of bridging nature and the mind is not as easy and straightforward as the finality of nature proposed in Kant’s critique of judgment. As John Beer points out in “Wordsworth and the Face of Things,” “It is a familiar pattern in Wordsworth’s poetry: on the one hand the inner work of the poems, which is speculative and outthrusting, and then, surrounding that, the construction of a larger ordered whole to contain it” (2006: 110).¹³ In Wordsworth’s writing, there is an apparently “ordered whole” that seems “larger” and thus is able to “contain” the inner fragmentary forces. However, it is noticeable that this inner play of forces is merely “contain[ed]” in the surface frame of the whole; they are still at work within the structure of the poet’s writing. In comparison with Kant, Wordsworth’s judgment of natural beauty is far more problematic and disturbing. It is these ideas of fragment and perplexity that my study seeks to address.

Though Kant’s transcendental idealism has had a fundamental influence on Western philosophical thinking, numerous studies have been devoted to questioning Kant’s metaphysics. Here, the key target has been his over-dependence on the subjective nature and function of the mind. As Charles I. Armstrong criticizes, “Kantian position is offered—a position which is the grounds for the idealist

¹³ Likely, M. H. Abrams points out: “In the course of *The Prelude* Wordsworth repeatedly drops the clue that his work has been designed to round back to its point of departure. ‘Not with these began / Our Song, and not with these our Song must end’” (1971a: 79).

aporia rather than its solution—whereby the abstract standing apart of subject and object is circumvented by having the subject already having determined any possible grounds for the appearance of the object” (2003: 136). Indeed, Kant’s philosophy never successfully achieves a solution to the problem of dichotomy in dualism. The mind is endowed with the dominant power of subjective function that masks the gap between subject and object—freedom of human will and nature—and thus determines “the appearance of the object.” The transcendental idealism privileges a subjective power—a preconditioned regulative idea of the whole—and denies the reality of thing-in-itself. The conflict in dualism remains unresolved. *The Literary Absolute* directly criticizes the Kantian imagination that is at play in the synthetic function of the mind. It is a futile resolution leading to

the never substantial “substance” of the “subject” by means of the *beautiful*:

What is formed or constructed by the transcendental imagination is thus an object that may be grasped within the limits of *a priori* intuition but is nothing that can be thought under the concept of . . . *Idea* . . . such a cognition is incapable of restoring anything like a subject . . . [There is merely] an apparently compensatory “promotion” of the *moral subject* . . . It is indeed posited as freedom, and freedom is the locus of “self-consciousness.” . . . As a moral subject, in sum, the subject recovers none of its substance (Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, 1988: 30-31).

Thus the subjectively-formed object is removed from its original physical world to the realm that “may be grasped within the limit of *a priori* intuition.” In this noumenal world, everything turns out to be formed by “the transcendental imagination.” A self-caused “*moral subject*” takes place of the object-in-itself; none of its substance can be restored because it is “posited as freedom,” which is “the locus of ‘self-consciousness.’” The idea that self-

consciousness is located in “freedom” in which there is “the limit of *a priori* intuition” continues to be questionable.

III. The Kantian Sublime Versus the Wordsworth Sublime

This section will focus particularly on Kant’s philosophy of the sublime, which has remained influential in philosophy and aesthetic theory since the late eighteenth century. My reading traces the way Wordsworth presents his vision of the sublime under the influence of Kant and explores the intricate link that has been woven between mind and landscape in this poet’s writing. Kant thinks that it is our “subjective capacity for feeling which determines the nature of our pleasurable or displeasurable responses” (Crowther, 2003). He believes that the sublime exists in our innate sense of superiority to nature in our mind. Kant says that the sublime “cannot be contained in any sensible form but concerns only ideas of reason, which though they cannot be exhibited adequately, are aroused and called to mind by this very inadequacy, which can be exhibited in sensibility” (1987: 98).¹⁴ In the sublime, reason, “aroused and called to the mind,” is able to make a totality of the whole world. In judging nature as dynamically sublime, we find natural objects fearful without being afraid of them because, as Kant explains,

Although we found our own limitation when we consider the immensity of nature and the inadequacy of our ability to adopt a standard proportionate to estimating aesthetically the magnitude of nature’s *domain*, yet we also found, in our power of reason, a different and nonsensible standard that has this infinity itself under it as a unit. (120)

¹⁴ Concerning the interplay of the imagination and reason in the judgment of the sublime, Patricia M. Matthew says that “a judgment of sublimity is, after all, a reflective judgment. It involves a state in which imagination and reason remain in harmony without any determination of the imaginative content by reason” (1996: 173).

This subjective passion for the *immense might* of nature reveals in us an independent quality, that seems to make us superior to the outer world. However, de Man finds this concept of the sublime essentially problematic:

If imagination, the faculty of the sublime, comes into being at the expense of the totalizing power of the mind, how can it then, as the text requires, be in contrastive harmony with the faculty of reason, which delimits the contours of this totality? What the imagination undoes is the very labour of reason, and such a relationship cannot without difficulty be said to unite both of them, imagination and reason, in a common task or law of being. Kant's definition of aesthetic judgment as what represents the subjective play of the faculties (imagination and reason) as "harmonious through their very contrast" remains, at this point, quite obscure. (1996: 76)

De Man then finds this relationship between imagination and reason to be questionable, as now these two faculties undo each other "through their very contrast." Thus de Man views Kant's development of the sublime as "the exchange from part to whole [which] generates wholes that turn out to be only parts" (77). He finds in the Kantian sublime those fundamentally conflicting elements that are at play in the process of making a harmonious whole.

The influence of these Kantian concepts of the sublime—the idea of limitlessness that refuses closure and a super-added thought of totality that invokes unity—is clear in Coleridge's and Wordsworth's poetry. "Kubla Khan" has been said to be Coleridge's encounter with the sublime after he fell asleep under the influence of opium.¹⁵ In the dream, as the poet recalled, he beheld the

¹⁵ Harry White states in "Coleridge's Uncertain Agony" that "Coleridge's writings are loaded with evidence that he suffered from a medical disorder: the 'nature of [his] body & mind' is disturbed by an unhealthy . . . vividness of Thoughts"; "He regularly suffers from 'incurable depression of Spirits, Brooding, Indolence,

splendid scenery of Xanadu; with clear recollection, the overflow of his feelings has been so powerful (“A mighty fountain momentarily was forced,” 2012: 461) that he, in the dream, “close[s] [his] eyes with holy dread” when confronting the mightiness of the power of imagination. The interrelation between “pleasure dome,” “the sacred river,” and “fertile ground” appears to develop the very sense of sublime in Coleridge’s writing; as Tim Fulford shows, Coleridge’s “note of c. 1805 establishes that to intimate this one life in the variety of nature is effectively to produce sublimity”—“it allows the viewer or listener to experience and speculate upon a unity in diversity, a variety blending into oneness” (Fulford, 1996: 817). However, the poem has been left incomplete also because of his very awareness of the inherent “Romantic chasm”, a “haunted” and “savage” place, that “slanted / Down the green hum athwart a cedarn cover!” (Coleridge, 2012: 461). Timothy Bahti offers a closer analysis of the very sense of awe formed here: “when a fragment is precisely to *mirror* a missing totality, this means . . . that the ‘totality’ is inverted into a fragment. . . . Ultimately it is the same with our fragmentary understanding of the poem, for to interpret the fragments—the various words and images which are to mirror a meaning—means to understand their inversions of meaning as totality into meaning as fragmentary, which then means forever to interpret their meaning in a fragmentary manner” (1981: 1046). Through Coleridge’s representation of the sublime in his dream vision we see the very “mis-shaping” power of fragments continually at play in totality that “slant” through our understanding of the world.

Of the sublime, Wordsworth says: “Power awakens the sublime either when it rouses us to a sympathetic energy and calls upon the mind to grasp at something towards which it can make approaches but which it is incapable of attaining” (1974b: 354). Like Kant and Coleridge, the poet thinks that the sublime is formed in

Despondence, thence Pains and nightly Horrors” (2009: 809).

the human mind: “I may have owed another gift, / Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood” (2010a: 50). However, this feeling causes a sense of vagueness in the mind; it is “the soul’s obscure sense / Of possible sublimity, to which / With growing faculties she doth aspire” (1991a: 132). For Wordsworth, the sublime is an “obscure sense” that the mind “is incapable of attaining” yet “doth aspire.” He “*may* have owned” it but it is just “*possible* sublimity” (my italics). The more he attempts to grasp the existence of this “something,” the more ambiguous his view of the sublime becomes.

Wordsworth’s more ambiguous and perplexing view of “the sublime” can be illustrated through his depiction of the scene on Mount Snowdon in *The Prelude* (Lee, 2012: 187-191). He depicts the transformation of the scene and its emerging sublimity:

. . . the Moon look’d down upon this shew
 In single glory, and we stood, the mist
 Touching our very feet: and from the shore
 At distance not the third part of a mile
 Was a blue chasm, a fracture in the vapour,
 A deep and gloomy breathing-place thro’ which
 Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams
 Innumerable, roaring with one voice.
 The universal spectacle throughout
 Was shaped for admiration and delight,
 Grand in itself alone, but in that breach
 Through which the homeless voice of waters rose,
 That dark deep thoroughfare had Nature lodg’d
 The Soul, the Imagination of the whole. (1991a: 314-315)

This paragraph manifests the generative and usurping power of language. The exhibition of sublimity on Mount Snowdon, as Wordsworth later recognizes, “appear’d to [him] / The perfect image of a mighty Mind” (315). This “image” of “a mighty Mind” glorified by Wordsworth is a new textual identity constituted by his later rewriting of the experience on Mount Snowdon. He attempts to glorify “the universal spectacle” (“the perfect image of a mighty

Mind”) by stating that it “throughout / Was shaped for admiration and delight.” The word “universal” indicates his aspiration for a unified whole of this sublime “image” of self. Nevertheless, the status of this new identity is made radically precarious by the dynamic interplay between internality and externality, as the textually constructed self is projected upon the landscape. Wordsworth desires to project his mind on to the landscape and to make it a unified whole. At the same time the images of asymmetry, contrasts, and fragmentations are created by his writing. In other words, the poet is creating unity and disunity simultaneously out of his troubled consciousness of the fracture between internality and externality. For example, “a huge sea of mist” intermingles and “usurp[s] upon” “the real Sea”; the moonlight above is in contrast with the darkness below. Moreover, “there is no single locus of majesty or mastery” (Weiskel, 1976: 247): the moon looks down from heaven “in single glory,” the waters are “roaring with one voice,” and the whole spectacle is “grand in itself alone.” There is no direct link connecting the moon, the waters, and the entire spectacle.

Wordsworth presents the powers of his mind by means of language, but he unsettles his own claim by building notions of contradiction and precariousness into his writing (Wilner, 2006: 27-30; also see Owen, 2006: 122-130, esp. 128-129). In this spectacle, “the vapour” not only usurps upon “the real Sea” but is also the place where the alteration of the landscape emerges. In the vapour, there is “a blue chasm,” “a fracture”—‘a deep and gloomy breathing-place’—which is, as Wordsworth describes it, the site of power and vitality. What craft is forming and working on this “chasm”? On the one hand, this craft comes from “one function of such mind” that “Nature [had] there / Exhibited” (315). The “chasm” is the “breathing-place” of the mind. On the other hand, “the mystery of words” simultaneously works on the “chasm,” indicated by a series of words—“deep,” “gloomy,” and “dark;” this play of words, to some extent, seemingly corresponds to the poet’s notion of the

“dark” and “invisible” “workmanship” at work in, by indication, the mind of man. In this sense, the imagination and the mind, expressed through the creative power of language, respond to it and find a reproduction of them as “other” in words. This transition between internality and externality is by no means a “Wordsworthian blank” (Fry, 1992: 9). The “mystery” of words starts to exert its power at the moment when “the voice of waters” is made “homeless.” In Wordsworth’s description of this “deep and gloomy breathing-place,” the “roaring” voice of “waters” goes up, beginning to exercise its power in its abundance and abruptly substitutes for the prior muteness. Hartman suggests that “Wordsworth’s utterance was not in time, and the darkness that came was not the darkness called;” Wordsworth’s utterance “revealed ‘speaking darkness,’ here the poet speaks the darkness” (1987: 107). The “roaring” voice emerges from the darkness—through the poet’s speech, which evokes “that dark deep thoroughfare.” But this paper shows that Wordsworth’s “speaking darkness” is his utterance that is ‘in time’ because “the darkness that came” is exactly “the darkness called.” When “the darkness” is called to this “chasm,” “the voice of waters” becomes “homeless,” just as the “unfather’d vapour” in the Alps loses its origin. “Darkness” comes with the mysterious power of words that excludes whatever is represented by it. The “darkness” in “the mystery of words” works its changes, creating a “breathing-place” for the mind in that “deep and gloomy” fracture.

In this “chasm,” the “mount[ing]” of the “roaring” voice multiplies and fragments the images there. There are “innumerable” “homeless” “waters, torrents, [and] streams.” In order to stabilize this fragmented and shadowy presentation of the natural images, Wordsworth’s “timely utterance” comes in: they are all “roaring with one voice”. The “voice of waters” is at once “homeless” and “one”; the “darkness” in the “breach” is both usurping and generative. Through the working of voice (“the roar of waters”), “the Soul, the Imagination” is formed and created in “that dark deep thoroughfare” (1991a: 315), like “the invisible world” that is

“shewn to us” “in such strength / Of usurpation” (190). It is exactly in this presentation of the “chasm” in the external landscape that Wordsworth’s internality confronts his externalized self-produced by language.

Jonathan Wordsworth in “The Image of a Mighty Mind” asserts that “Only it is belongs to God, or Nature, can the soul/ imagination have an actual existence. If God (Nature) stands outside, there is no longer the possibility of seeing the landscape in terms of the universal mind. . . . The chasm is deprived at a blow of the transcendental power it has come to possess” (2006: 236). However, in my reading of the sublime landscape on Mount Snowdon, there appears to no such dichotomy between the externalized nature and the chasm that has been claimed to be independent of any external shaping force. “Nature” has “lodg’d” “the Soul, the Imagination of the whole” in this “breach.” The word “lodg’d” indicates a temporary resting place for “the Soul, the Imagination of the whole” rather than a permanent and stable dwelling place. Intriguingly, “The Soul, the Imagination” is “lodg’d” in the “dark and deep thoroughfare,” remaining precariously detached from and “subordinate” to “the whole” in which it “lodg[es].” Through the landscape on Mount Snowdon, Wordsworth presents a self that is highly unstable, perilously “lodg’d” in the scene of its representation. As Gary Farnell puts it, Wordsworth’s self is “located at the narrative centre and circumference of the work” (1999). Ambiguously, Wordsworth’s writing focuses on his mental powers, but his use of language instils in them a sense of unsteadiness and (intentionally) “lodg[es]” them at the “center” of “the work.” In this sense, the imagination can never accomplish its “Negative Way” (Hartman, 1979b: 599) because Wordsworth’s writing does not allow full scope for its operation.

In the poet’s self-encounter on Mount Snowdon, the power of the mind is manifested by the landscape—through the working of language. Once embodied in words, the mind loses its identity, but Wordsworth is also aware that his mind cannot exercise its power

without resorting to externality. “The perfect image of a mighty Mind” on Snowdon drives Hartman to see a “breach or betrayal of Nature” (1964:132). Yet the relationship between the mind and nature in the poem is never that direct or straightforward. In Wordsworth’s writing, the imagination never achieves apocalypse because what it can at best create is merely an “image” of the mind. If “the Soul, [and] the Imagination” are represented only as parts of the “mighty Mind,” then Wordsworth seems to be saying that this “Mind” is “the whole,” the “one life,” that unifies everything both external and internal. “The Soul, the Imagination” are brought into oneness with the landscape, which constitutes “a mighty Mind.” Nevertheless, “the Soul, the Imagination” are merely precariously “lodg’d” by nature in a “blue chasm,” forming fragments within the whole unity. Moreover, as Wordsworth later shows, this sublime unity of the whole landscape merely appears to be “the perfect image of a mighty Mind.” The notion of fragment and “image” keeps Wordsworth further away from the “mighty Mind” to which he aspires.

IV. Coleridge’s Philosophy of Organicism and Its Influence on Wordsworth

Coleridge’s influence on Wordsworth was immense, and indeed Wordsworth once said: “[Coleridge’s] mind has been habitually present with me.”¹⁶ Margoliouth points out, “The two blossomed together, each a fostering sun for the other,”¹⁷ and James Heffernan says, “It is . . . impossible to isolate Wordsworth’s theory of poetry from that of Coleridge, just as it is impossible to measure

¹⁶ This quotation is taken from Mary Moorman’s *William Wordsworth: a Biography, the later years 1803-1850* (1968, 520).

¹⁷ H. M. Margoliouth’s comment on the Wordsworthian tone of the last ten lines of Coleridge’s ‘The Dungeon,’ in *Wordsworth and Coleridge 1795-1834* (London: Oxford U. Press, 1953), p. 95.” This quotation is from Thomas McFarland’s “The Symbiosis of Coleridge and Wordsworth” (1972: 263).

the exact amount of Wordsworth's intellectual debt to his friend" (1969: 5). *The Prelude* is Wordsworth's letter to Coleridge and *Biographia Literaria* is Coleridge's reply. Wordsworth had an intimate intellectual relationship with Coleridge, who thought that *The Prelude*'s account of "the Foundations and the Building-up / Of [a] Human Spirit" well represented the relation between mind and world "revealable" to "th'understanding mind" (1979: 542).

Organicism is defined in *Romantic Organicism* as "a grounding systematics for understanding all holistic structure. It is . . . a way of thinking meaningfully about wholes" (Armstrong, 2003: 2). Organicism can be defined as a grounding philosophy upon which literary works can base the attributes of living and growing things and thus form a totalised unity. The philosophy of organicism is illustrated by M. H. Abrams in his *Natural Supernaturalism* as:

all self-impelled motion, progress and productivity, hence all emergent novelty or 'creativity,' is a generative conflict-in-attraction of polar forces, which part to become reunited on a higher level of being, and thus evolve, or 'grow' from simple unity into a 'multeity in unity' which is an organized whole. (1971a: 268)

Abrams describes Coleridge's organic philosophy like this in *The Mirror and the Lamp*: "[his] imaginative unity is an organic unity: a self-evolved system, constituted by a living interdependence of parts, whose identity cannot survive their removal from the whole" (1971b: 175). This living whole is the base of an organic unity formed by the imagination. This organic whole is a process of self-completion—"self-generative, self-determinative, all-inclusive, and self-contained" (Abrams, 1971a: 172).

In *Biographia Litraria*, Coleridge talks about the organic unity of subject and object: "All knowledge rests on the coincidence of an object with a subject . . . truth is universally placed in the coincidence of the thought with the thing, of the representation with the object represented" (1975: 144). For him, knowledge and universal truth are based on a reciprocal concurrence of object and subject, and of

thought and thing. This process of truth-establishment is the goal towards which the organic system is moving. However, on a closer analysis, Coleridge's system of the organic whole seems ambiguous. Here, he describes the formation of a subject:

object and subject, being and knowing are identical, each involving and supposing the other . . . it is a subject which becomes a subject by the act of constructing itself objectively as itself; but which never is an object except for itself, and only so far by the very same act that it becomes a subject. It may be described therefore as a perpetual self-duplication of one and the same power into object and subject, which pre-suppose each other, and can exist only as antitheses. (152)

There is then always an inner mutual involvement between subject and object in the organic system. A subject is formed by its very opposition to an object. Though Coleridge views subject and object as identical, he also states that they "can exist only as antitheses." Ironically, these antitheses are formed by a "self-duplication of one and the same power" in this "self-evolved system." The subject, part of the organic whole, is acting and reacting through a process of "self-duplication" that intends to form the whole while actually not-completing or "incompleting" the whole through this very act. In this sense, the relationship between subject, object, and the whole that encompasses the two becomes ambiguous.

In order to achieve this organic unity, Coleridge proposes, "The highest perfection of natural philosophy would consist in the perfect spiritualization of all the laws of nature into laws of intuition and intellect" (1975: 146). When the physical things are spiritualised into mental images, they are transformed into interrelated parts, which work together toward a constitution of living whole. However, as Coleridge also points out: "our problem is to explain this concurrence, its possibility and its necessity. [T]his then is the problem of natural philosophy" (145). The feasibility of his philosophy's systematic ambition still seems questionable

because the explanation of this “concurrency” remains unclear.

Wordsworth shows in *The Prelude* that they both, to some extent, share the same vision of the world. At the same time, he confesses that he is bounded by Coleridge’s thoughts and desires (partial) independence from Coleridge. As the poet states:

With such a theme,
Coleridge! with this my argument, of thee
Shall I be silent? O most loving Soul!
Placed on this earth to love and understand,
And from thy presence shed the light of love,
Shall I be mute ere thou be spoken of?
Thy gentle Spirit to my heart of hearts
Did also find its way; and thus the life
Of all things and the mighty unity
In all which we behold, and feel, and are,
Admitted more habitually a mild
Interposition, and closelier gathering thoughts
Of man and his concerns, such as become
A human Creature, be he who he may,
Poet, or destined to an humbler name. (1991a: 260)

To Wordsworth, Coleridge’s “gentle Spirit” “find[s] its way” “to [his] heart,” and “thus” this “interposition” is admitted more habitually into “the life of all things” and “the mighty unity / In all which we behold, and feel.” Coleridge’s philosophy of organic oneness helps to regulate and assemble “man and his concerns.” In *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge talks about “an intellectual intuition” that “grasps the organism as a *holistic system*” (1975: 234-235). In this system, “the whole of material nature is reducible to a system of exclusively mechanical laws,” which, as Wordsworth puts it, govern “the life / Of all things” and create “the mighty unity / In all which we behold.” Wordsworth views this “mighty unity,” the “clear Synthesis,” as “an independent world / Created out of pure intelligence” (1991a: 181). In addition, Coleridge insists on “philosophical knowledge of facts under the relation of cause and

effect" (1975: 73) that "disposes us to notice the similarities and contrasts of things" (73). This "philosophical knowledge" motivates "closelier gathering thoughts / Of man and his concerns" with the "logic" of "cause and effect." This aspect of Coleridge's influence upon Wordsworth's thinking seems to continue till the 1850 text of *The Prelude*. In 1815, he writes to Wordsworth: "I supposed you first to have meditated the faculties of Man *in the abstract*" (1979: 542, emphasis added). In the 1850 text of his poem, Wordsworth revises "the life / Of all things and the mighty unity / In all which we behold, and feel" to "thoughts and things / In the self-haunting spirit learned to take / More rational proportions" (1979: 473). It would appear that Coleridge's "logical" "interposition" extended into Wordsworth's "incumbent mystery of sense and soul" (1979: 473) virtually to the end of his life, still encouraging Wordsworth to think about these things in terms of a "synthesis" of "rational proportions."

However, in the above quoted paragraph, Wordsworth also seeks some space for self-assertion when the "interposition" of Coleridge's thoughts intrudes upon his "heart." This "interposition" is called "a mild interposition." Though Coleridge has his own philosophical vision of the world, Wordsworth attempts to say that what he himself is talking about in *The Prelude* is equally important and even an alternative version of the same thing. Coleridge's presence in, and influence on, what Wordsworth is saying is only "mild." Coleridge asks him to "[meditate] the faculties of Man in the abstract," but in the 1850 text Wordsworth talks to his friend as follows: "O Friend! (I speak / With *due regret*), how much is *overlooked* / In human nature and her subtle ways / As studied first in our own hearts, and then / In life among the passions of mankind" (1979: 477, my italics). By implication, Wordsworth means that Coleridge's way of thinking cannot adequately enable him to gain a full insight into "human nature and her subtle ways" and "the passions of mankind." Wordsworth asserts his right to identity by "becom[ing] / A human Creature, be he who he may, / Poet, or

destined to an humbler name”—thereby containing and limiting Coleridge’s presence in his own poem. This statement shows his developing sense of identity both in the ‘growth’ of his own mind and in the mind’s relation to Coleridge as it counteracts and moves beyond Coleridge’s ‘system of exclusively mechanical laws’.

While Coleridge seems most confident in his organic view of the world, Wordsworth’s writing seems to be on the precarious border between the real world and our own mind or mental state and thus may seem to further obscure this boundary at the end. Indeed it has been claimed that “the fragment is the romantic genre *par excellence*” (Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, 1988: 40). “The fragmentary work is neither directly nor absolutely the Work.” Writing (“the fragmentary work”) re-iterates, doubles, fragments, and replaces any original unrepresentable experience (“Work”). “But its own individuality must be grasped, nonetheless, with respect to its relation to the work. Fragmentary individuality is above all that of the multiplicity inherent to the genre” (42-43).

In one manuscript of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth states that “Imagination”:

Lifting up itself
 Before the eye and progress of my Song
 that bestows
 Like an unfather’d vapour; ~~here that Power,~~
 Its presence on some solitary place
~~In all~~ the might of its endowments, came
 A thwart me . . . [MS. A 135r] (1991b: 671)

The imagination is like a “vapour,” to which Wordsworth gives a substantial “presence,” but “its presence” is “bestow[ed]” on “some solitary place.” The words “some” and “solitary,” echoing the word “unfather’d,” again draw the imagination away from “the eye and progress of [his] Song.” While seemingly celebrating the “glory” of his “Soul,” Wordsworth’s use of language enlarges the distance between his self and the textually-constructed imagination. In addition, where Hartman says of the “unmediated” “force” of the

imagination, in fact Wordsworth's revision shows the impossibility of this "unmediated" imagination once the imagination "bestows / Its presence on some . . . place." In this sense, the imagination is mediated by its external "presence" and even its "Power" is unsettled. Furthermore, this most intense feeling of sublime visitation intermingles with a sense of instability and hollowness. At this moment, ambiguously, he is "lost" and "halted" at the same time.

This sense of "loss" remains, resulting in his baffled and fragmented "consciousnesses" of being between the textually produced self and the self he seeks to recall in writing. Earlier he describes the mighty play of the imagination that entraps and overwhelms him. However, he later "say[s]" "to [his] Soul" that he realizes its "glory" when he strives to get rid of the grasp of the imagination. This shift from "that Power" to "my Song" is vague, perplexing, but revealing. The power of the imagination is created by his poetic utterance, reinvented as the other self to his own self. Wordsworth's writing leaves the imagination outside his "Song" and makes it "unfather'd." According to Mary Jacobus, Wordsworth's naming of infinitude is inscribed through "death by writing," "the defile which so traumatically confronts Wordsworth in the failure of the Sublime to inscribe itself beyond textuality, which is also the failure of the subject to reside 'with infinitude, and only there'" (1989: 15) De Man also remarks that "Poetic language . . . is always constitutive, able to posit regardless of presence but, by the same token, unable to give a foundation to what it posits except as an intent of consciousness" (1984:6). In my discussion, however, I look not at the sublime entities "beyond textuality" but at the vital working of language in the text, in which Wordsworth attempts to inscribe the Sublime.

The relationship between a fragmentary work and the Work is abstruse. The fragment is at once part-in-itself and part of the whole. The fragment can be said to be a supplement of totality, and *vice versa*—"Totality is the fragment itself in its completed individuality.

It is thus identically the plural totality of fragments, which does not make up a whole but replicates the whole, the fragmentary itself, in each fragment” (44). The fragment is not identical with the whole, but it “replicates” the whole on the basis of its fragmentary totality. At the end, in poetic writing, the whole is forever in the position of presence, whose presence is replaced by the presence of the fragment.

Kant characterized organicist systematics with three related terms: hierarchical totalizations, the interdependence of parts, and external delimitation. The core problem of the organicist system is revealed exactly in its inner tension between a vertical hierarchical totalization and a horizontal interrelationship between parts. In addition, in the act of exterior delimitation, the interior of the organicist structure is shown to be devoid of possibility of its asserted totality. A sense of ambivalence attends organicism when it holds its dream of an organic whole while failing to notice each individually-growing inner part. Each part seeks self-preservation in its sense of being included in a whole. As Armstrong illustrates:

[Classical models of organic unity] are largely based on causal or logical relations . . . a relation that is fundamentally ambivalent: every element is *both* active and passive in relation to every other element. This reciprocity is, of course, constitutive of the interlinking between receptive sensibility (passive) and spontaneous understanding (active) in the transcendental doctrine of elements in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. (2003: 128)

An essentially ambivalent system is lurking underneath this “organic unity.” While mostly there are “causal or logical relations” existing in classical models of organic unity, its inner ambivalence shows that each element in the whole turns out to be a fragment that is “*both* active and passive.” This “*both* active and passive” element subverts the traditional understanding of a logic of “causal” relationships. While each fragment is passively incorporated with other elements in the whole framework, it is also actively working its individual power that attempts to replicate the whole. It is this very unstable

character of the fragment in the whole that sets a limit on the organicist claim of harmony of, for example, Kantian “receptive sensibility . . . and spontaneous understanding,” and the categorical understanding and transcendental freedom of the will.

For Coleridge, an organic life exists in the connection between language and the mind. “The best part of human language, properly so called, is derived from reflections on the acts of the mind itself. It is formed by a voluntary appropriation of fixed symbols to internal acts, to processes and results of imagination” (1975: 197). He thinks that the organic growth of language begins from “reflections on the acts of the mind itself” and develops through the appropriation of literary symbols to the inner imaginative mental activity. The mind contemplates the natural objects in relation to the transcendental ideas and thus transforms them into symbols of the mental world. Don H. Bialostosky’s claim that “when Coleridge translates ‘real’ language as ‘common’ language, he focuses exclusively on a language’s relation to its users and ignores the importance of its relation to the *objects* envisioned by its users” (1978: 918) seems to be questionable here. I would say that Coleridge, rather than “ignor[ing] the importance of [language’s] relation to the *objects* envisioned by its users,” *distorts* this relation *as* the mind’s relation to objects and thus believes that language, as “a language of spirit” (Coleridge, 1975: 158), is able to transform objects into symbolic images of the mind. As Coleridge himself says in *Biographia Literaria*: “the mind is affected by thoughts rather than by things; and only feels the requisite interest even for the most important events and accidents, when by means of meditation they have passed into *thought*” (1975: 17). Through the act of “meditation,” then, these external objects are presented in language as thoughts.

On the other hand, Wordsworth believes that “a far more philosophical language” arises out of “incidents and situations from common life” because in these “the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity” and indeed that “in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with

the beautiful and permanent forms of nature” (2010b: 59). In this way, he lays the foundation for the possibility of an organic growth of language in “the opinions, thoughts / Of those plain-living people” (1991a: 156), because “a freshness also found I at this time / In human Life, the life I mean of those / Whose occupations really I lov’d” (155). Stephen Maxfield Parrish rightly says that “the passion that Wordsworth expressed in poetry was likely to be that of his characters, the passion that Coleridge looked for was mainly that of the poet. For Wordsworth, this passion could appear only if the poet maintained a strict dramatic propriety; for Coleridge, the passion was obscure unless the poet spoke in his own voice” (1958: 371). This is a crucial point where Wordsworth’s view of language differs from Coleridge’s. Coleridge’s rhetorical world is built on the human mind itself, so that he is “[speaking] in his own voice.” Wordsworth’s writing is driven by a wider range of influences, such as his own life experiences.

While Coleridge’s landscape contains symbolic relationships with his inner creative mind, Wordsworth’s presentation of the landscape here appears to be more ambiguous. For example, in “Kubla Khan”, the stability and sweetness of the “pleasure-dome” and its surroundings are built and maintained by Kubla Khan himself, which indicates that the whole spectacle is shaped by human power—that of our creative imagination. However, Wordsworth claims in Book XIII of *The Prelude* that the scene on Mount Snowdon “appear’d to me / The perfect image of a mighty Mind” (1991a: 315), which complicates his vision of the landscape. The phrase “appear’d to me” already suggests some distance between the poet and the spectacle. The poet now becomes a spectator who is watching the mighty play of the whole landscape. He is not part of the scene, but rather the whole spectacle appears as an “image” of “a mighty Mind.” The boundary between self and the external world is further blurred up by the series of metaphorical substitutions. On the one hand, the landscape appears as an *image* of the mind; on the other hand, the soul and the imagination are lodged by nature itself

in that deep chasm which is both part and not part of the whole spectacle. This intense sense of ambiguity which we feel in Wordsworth's poetic presentations of the inside and the outside, the part and the whole, can be very powerful.

An intricate and complex link between the mind and its "image" projected upon the awe-inspiring sublimity on Mount Snowdon is built when Wordsworth claims that the spectacle appears to him: "The perfect image of a mighty mind, / Of one that feeds upon infinity, / That is exalted by an under-presence / The sense of God, or whatsoe'er is dim / Or vast in its own being" (1991a: 315). The mind itself corresponds to the "under-presence" that serves to exalt the "image" of the "mighty Mind." Wordsworth's use of the prefix "under" suggests the inexpressible and incommunicable nature of his interiority.

De Man points out, "The autobiographical moment happens as an alignment between two subjects involved in the process of reading in which they determine each other by mutual reflexive substitution. The structure implies differentiation as well as similarity, since both depend on a substitutive exchange that constitutes the subject." (1979b: 921). Although the self and the other exist in "an alignment," I do not think that they are in "mutual reflexive substitution" in Wordsworth's description of the Snowdon landscape. The other self in writing threatens to deface Wordsworth's own subjectivity while posing as a projection of it. This other self is "visible," serving as an "image" of the self while his interiority remains hidden and silent. This is the way Wordsworth comes to demonstrate the grandeur of his mental power but it is also the way he invalidates his claim because of a problematic contradiction between self and language.

V. Conclusion

I have traced and retraced what I take to be some of the most

crucial literary-philosophical and intertextual exchanges between Kant, Coleridge, and Wordsworth in order to explore their treatment of the interrelation between the mind (or the imagination) and nature (or external world of sense perception). I have done so by reading and interpreting a variety of their poetic works, which continue to possess great aesthetic and philosophical significance. In comparison with Kant and Coleridge, Wordsworth's writing, in which the boundary between the outer and inner worlds always appears to be vague, is intensely involved with a sense of ambiguity and uncertainty, as now the boundary between the outer and inner worlds may tend to become more vague, ambiguous, and uncertain. The goal of this study is then to offer a more complete understanding of the interconnection between and among this philosopher and these two poets, and to show how, after Kant's German Idealism to Coleridge's Organicism, Wordsworth still engages with the same philosophical, aesthetic and poetic issues while also expressing a deeper sense of our mortality and taking on a mask for a profound sense of creative loss—that of the limitations of our creative and imaginative powers. It is precisely the recognition of fragmentations and contradictions in his forming act of the human mind that keeps Wordsworth's writing moving forward and transforms it into epic engagement with the problem of identity-formation, to which the Revolution first alerted Wordsworth, but which he then found to be replicated everywhere in man's existence—in his relationships to language and nature.

References

- Abrams, M. H. (1971a). *Natural supernaturalism: Tradition and revolution in romantic literature*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Abrams, M. H. (1971b). *The mirror and the lamp: Romantic theory and the critical tradition*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Armstrong, C. I. (2003). *Romantic organicism: From idealist origins to ambivalent afterlife*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bahti, T. (1981). Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" and the fragment of Romanticism. *MLN*, 96, 5: 1035-1050.
- Beer, J. (2006). Wordsworth and the face of things. *Wordsworth Circle*, 37, 3: 104-111.
- Bennett, A. (2007). *Wordsworth writing*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Bialostosky, D. H. (1978). Coleridge's interpretation of Wordsworth's preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. *PMLA*, 93, 5: 912-924.
- Bittner, J. (2017). Roland Barthes and the literary absolute: The conditions of the necessity to write intransitively. *Barthes Studies*, 3: 2-24
- Coleridge, S. T. (1975). *Biographia literaria*. London: Dent.
- Coleridge, S. T. (1978). *The collected works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Vol. 3. Essays on his times in the morning post and the courier*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Coleridge, S. T. (1979). To William Wordsworth. In S. Gill, J. Wordsworth, & M. H. Abrams (Eds.), *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850: Authoritative texts, context and reception, recent critical essays* (pp. 542-545). London: Norton.
- Coleridge, S. T. (2012). Kubla Khan: Or a vision in a dream. In S. Greenblatt & C. T. Christ (Eds.), *Norton anthology of English literature* (Vol. 2, pp. 459-462). New York: W. W. Norton.
- Crowther, P. (2003). *The Kantian sublime: from morality to art*. Oxford Scholarship Online. Retrieved from <http://>

- oxfordscholarship.com/oso/public/content/philosophy/9780198239314/toc.html
- De Man, P. (1979a). *Allegories of reading: Figural language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust*. London: Yale University Press.
- De Man, P. (1979b). Autobiography as de-facement. *MLN*, 94, 5: 919-930.
- De Man, P. (1984). *The rhetoric of romanticism*. New York, London: Columbia University Press.
- De Man, P. (1996). *Aesthetic ideology*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Derrida, J. (1976). *Of grammatology*. (G. C. Spivak, Trans.). London: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Farnell, G. (1999). Wordsworth's *The Prelude* as autobiography of an orphan. *Romanticism on the Net*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.7202/005847ar>
- Ferguson, F. (1977). *Wordsworth: Language as counter-spirit*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Fichte, J. G. (1982). *Science of knowledge (Wissenschaftslehre)* (Heath & J. Lachs, Eds.). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Fleischacker, S. (1996). Poetry and truth-conditions. In R. Eldridge (Ed.) *Beyond representation: philosophy and poetic imagination* (pp. 107-131). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Fry, P. (1992). Clearings in the way: Non-epiphany in Wordsworth. *Studies in Romanticism*, 31, 1: 3-19.
- Fulford, T. (1996). The politics of the sublime: Coleridge and Wordsworth in Germany. *The Modern Language Review*, 9, 4: 817-832.
- Hamilton, P. (1983). *Coleridge's poetics*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Hamilton, P. (2007). *Coleridge and German philosophy: The poet in the land of logic*. London: Continuum.
- Hartman, G. (1964). *Wordsworth's poetry 1787-1814*. New

- Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Hartman, G. (1979a). Words, wish, worth: Wordsworth. In H. Bloom et al. (Eds.), *Deconstruction and criticism* (pp. 143-176). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Hartman, G. (1979b). A poet's progress: Wordsworth and the via naturaliter negativa. In J. Wordsworth et al. (Eds.), *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850: Authoritative texts, context and reception, recent critical essays* (pp. 598-613). New York: Norton.
- Hartman, G. (1987). *The unremarkable Wordsworth*. London: Methuen.
- Heffernan, J. (1969). *Wordsworth's theory of poetry: The transforming imagination*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Hegel, G. W. F. (2003). *The phenomenology of mind*. (J. B. Baillie., Trans.) New York: Dover Publications.
- Hoolsema, D. J. (2004). The echo of an impossible future in *The Literary Absolute*. *MLN*, 119: 845-868.
- Jackson, N. (2003). Critical conditions: Coleridge, "common Sense," and the literature of self-experiment. *ELH*, 70, 1: 117-149.
- Jacobus, M. (1989). *Romanticism, writing, and sexual difference: essays on The Prelude*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.
- Kant, I. (1987). *Critique of judgment*. (W. S. Pluhar, Trans.). Cambridge, UK: Hackett publishing company.
- Kant, I. (1990). *Critique of pure reason*. (J. M. D. Meiklejohn, Trans.). New York: Prometheus Books.
- Kant, I. (2010). *Critique of practical reason*. New York: Classic Books International.
- Lacoue-Labarthe, P., & Nancy, J.-L. (1988). *The literary absolute: The theory of literature in German romanticism*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Lee, C.-J. (2012). *Timely utterances: Re-reading the Wordsworth of the 1805 Prelude*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, the

- University of Manchester, UK.
- Martella, G. (1999). "Reflection and imagination: Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* and Schelling," *La questione Romantica*, n. doppio 7/8, 173-190.
- Matthews, P. M. (1996). A form of pure aesthetic reflective judgment. *The Journal of Aesthetic and Art Criticism*, 54, 2: 165-180.
- McFarland, T. (1972). The symbiosis of Coleridge and Wordsworth. *Studies in Romanticism*, 11, 4: 263-304.
- Miles, T. (2009). *William Wordsworth-The Prelude*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Modiano, R. (1985). *Coleridge and the concept of nature*. London: Macmillan.
- Moorman, M. (1968). *William Wordsworth: A biography, the later years 1803-1850*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Owen, W. J. B. (2006). The perfect image of a mighty mind. *The Wordsworth Circle*, 37, 3: 122-130.
- Park, R. (1968). Coleridge and Kant: Poetic imagination and practical reason. *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 8: 335-346.
- Park, R. (1969). Coleridge's two voices as a critic of Wordsworth. *ELH*, 36, 2: 361-381.
- Parrish, S. M. (1958). The Wordsworth-Coleridge controversy. *PMLA*, 73, 3: 367-374.
- Roberts, J. (2006). Wordsworth's apocalypse. *Literature and Theology*, 20, 4: 361-378.
- Schlutz, A. (2015). Wordsworth and Coleridge on imagination. In R. Gravil & D. Robinson (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of William Wordsworth* (pp. 499-515). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Stoddard, E. W. (1985). Flashes of the invisible world: Reading *The Prelude* in the context of the Kantian sublime. *The Wordsworth Circle*, 16, 1: 32-37.
- Trott, N. (1998). The picturesque, the beautiful and the sublime. In D. Wu (Ed.), *A companion to Romanticism* (pp. 72-90).

- Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Ulmer, W. A. (2009). Radical similarity: Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the dejection dialogue. *ELH*, 76, 1: 189-213.
- Ward, A. (2006). *Kant: The three critiques*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.
- Warminski, A. (2001). Returns of the sublime: Positing and performative in Kant, Fichte, and Schiller. *MLN*, 166, 5: 964-978.
- Weiskel, T. (1976). *The romantic sublime: Studies in the structure and psychology of transcendence*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Wheeler, K. M. (1984). *German aesthetic and literary criticism: The romantic ironists and Goethe*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Wheeler, K. M. (1993). *Romanticism, pragmatism, and deconstruction*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- White, H. (2009). Coleridge's uncertain agony. *SEL*, 49, 4: 807-839.
- Wilner, J. (2006). "Self-displacing vision": Snowdon and the dialectic of the senses. *The Wordsworth Circle*, 37, 1: 27-30.
- Wlecke, A. O. (1973). *Wordsworth and the sublime*. London: University of California Press.
- Wordsworth, J. (2006). The image of a mighty mind (1805, Book 13). In S. Gill (Ed.), *William Wordsworth's The Prelude: A Casebook* (pp. 225-258). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Wordsworth, W. (1958). Prospectus to *The Recluse*. In R. Sharrock (Ed.), *Selected poems of William Wordsworth* (pp. 30-32). Oxford, UK: Heinemann Educational Publishers.
- Wordsworth, W. (1974a). Essay upon epitaphs. In W. J. B. Owen & J. W. Smyser (Eds.), *The prose works of William Wordsworth* (Vol. 2, pp. 49-96). Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.
- Wordsworth, W. (1974b). The Sublime and the beautiful. In W. J. B. Owen & J. W. Smyser (Eds.), *The prose works of William*

- Wordsworth* (Vol. 2, pp. 349-360). Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.
- Wordsworth, W. (1979). *The Prelude* of 1850 in fourteen books. In S. Gill, J. Wordsworth, & M. H. Abrams (Eds.), *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850: Authoritative texts, context and reception, recent critical essays* (pp. 29-483). London: Norton.
- Wordsworth, W. (1991a). *The thirteen-book Prelude* (Vol. 1). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Wordsworth, W. (1991b). *The thirteen-book Prelude* (Vol. 2). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Wordsworth, W. (2010a). Lines (Written a few miles above Tintern Abbey). In S. Gill (Ed.), *William Wordsworth* (pp. 49-53). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Wordsworth, W. (2010b). Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. In S. Gill (Ed.), *William Wordsworth* (pp. 57-77). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Wordsworth, W., & Wordsworth, D. (1967). *The letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, Vol. 1: The early years 1787-1805*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

現實與文學呈現之間：
華茲華斯、康德與柯爾律治作品中的疆界跨越

李佳容

國立中山大學外國語文學系
80424 高雄市鼓山區蓮海路 70 號
Email: chiajungl@mail.nsysu.edu.tw

摘 要

此論文探討西方哲學史中深具影響力的人物——康德與柯爾律治——對華茲華斯的文學創作影響；德國理想主義至英國有機體論皆探討對於思想的美學呈現，美學創作旨在型塑一個「絕對」可被美學直接觸及的世界。康德認識論中的核心論點為世界的理性秩序是由以規則為本的「綜合」活動所創造，而此活動源自人心；相對地，柯爾律治認為在自然中存有「以經驗為根據」的法則，其有機整體論中存有不同片斷力量，而正是此整體與不完整的組合構成其創造哲學，此研究將嘗試揭露出華茲華斯的自然文學呈現中更複雜的交織點——整體中不完整性同時「複製」了整體性——以深入研究華茲華斯文學創作歷程中，受到西方哲學影響的同時，如何亦帶入其深藏的失落感。

關鍵詞：華茲華斯、康德、柯爾律治、美學創作、「文學絕對性」