Bloom (1970), p. 9, writes, "Romantic nature poetry, despite a long critical history of misrepresentation, was an anti-nature poetry." Paul de Man, "Intentional Structure of the Romantic Image," *Romanticism and Consciousness*, p. 71, writes of "the alternating feeling of attraction and repulsion that the romantic poet experiences toward nature . . ."

[7]Edward Kessler, *Metaphors of Being* (1980), p. 17, writes "Nature itself creates neither form nor matter; hence man is superior to Nature because he may assert his creative will. Separation, not union, is man's means of self-discovery." See also pp. 23, 30, 32, 35, 37, 64, 72, 104.

[8]For the recent popular interest in these topics see Rosemary Dinnage, "Thoughts on Thoughts: Review of Jonathan Miller's *States of Mind*," *New York Review of Books*, 30 (Aug. 18, 1983), 36-37; and James Gleick, "Exploring the Labyrinth of the Mind: Douglas Hofstadter" *New York Times Magazine* (August 21, 1983), pp. 23 ff.

Flashes of the Invisible World: Reading *The Prelude* in the Context of the Kantian Sublime

Eve Walsh Stoddard
Clarkson University

In his later years, Wordsworth emphatically denied any direct knowledge of German philosophy. Writing to Crabb Robinson in 1840 about charges of plagiarism against Coleridge, he says "With the part concerning the imputation of thefts from Schelling, having never read a word of German metaphysics, thank Heaven! though I doubt not that they are good diet for some tastes, I feel no disposition to meddle."[1] Similarly, Sir William Hamilton reported Wordsworth's avowal that he was "utterly ignorant of everything connected with Kant or his philosophy."[2] We have no reason to doubt Wordsworth's claim that he read no German philosophy. Nonetheless, there is a striking congruence between many of Wordsworth's philosophical concerns, especially in *The Prelude*, and Kant's revolutionary reinterpretations of epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics. Despite their differences 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.[3] Thus from the period of the 1805 *Prelude* onward, many of Wordsworth's ideas on the relationship between mind and nature and on morality can be illuminated by comparison with Kant's critical philosophy. This paper will explicate Wordsworth's evolving interpretation of the sublime as a sign of the mind's transcendent power through comparison with Kant's analysis of the sublime in *The Critique of Judgment* (1790).

Burke's *Enquiry* (1757) is the strongest statement on the sublime in eighteenth-century England, and, as W.J.B. Owen and others have shown, it clearly influenced Wordsworth's conception of his relationship to nature.[4] Owen has established Wordsworth's habitual use of the "Burkean doublet" of fear and love in *The Prelude*.[5] *The Prelude* couches its narrative of the poet's development in the framing context of the Burkean aesthetic: "Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up / Foster'd alike by beauty and by fear" (1805, I, 305-6).[6] I shall show how the poet both subsumes and outgrows Burke's sensationist model of the sublime, through close reflection on his own experiences of sublimity. This view is supported by Wordsworth's fragmentary prose treatise "The Sublime and the Beautiful." In "The Sublime and the Beautiful," Wordsworth distinguishes between a cultured and a primitive (or childlike) reaction to the sublime: "The relative proportions in which we are affected by the qualities of these objects are different at different periods of our lives."[7] The "personal fear & surprize or wonder" which tend to affect the child are closer to Burke's sublime than the "comprehensive awe" or "religious admiration" that take their place (PrW 353). This treatise, written approximately seven years after the 1805 *Prelude*, suggests that the poet had an earlier, naive view of sublimity, which was later superseded by a view closer to the Kantian. My current argument analyzes the transition, inscribed in *The Prelude*, to the more "cultured" or "mature" view.

To understand the changes Wordsworth works in his interpretation of sublimity, we must see his relationship to the dominant British theories on the subject. Two major manifestations of the sublime were the rhetorical, originating especially in the fragment attributed to Longinus, *On the Sublime*, and the natural, codified in many travel guides and landscape descriptions.[8] Burke's *Enquiry*, grounded on an extremely materialist version of Lockean

Copyright (c) 2006 ProQuest Information and Learning Company
Copyright (c) New York University

empiricism, defines the sublime according to the emotion it produces in the subject: "Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime* (ESB, 39). While equating terror with sublimity, Burke cautions that the danger or pain must not "press too nearly." The highest degree of the sublime in nature, writes Burke, produces the emotion of astonishment: "that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object . . . . it anticipates our reasonings and hurries us on by an irresistable force . . . the inferior effects are admiration, reverence and respect" (ESB, 57). The "inferior effects" of "admiration, reverence and respect" are those associated with the rhetorical tradition, the feelings produced by Milton's poetry or by God speaking to Job out of the whirlwind in the Old Testament. Burke locates the essence of the sublime in a mind-stopping horror. On the supernatural concept of infinity and eternity, usually associated with sublimity in the eighteenth century, Burke says rather perfunctorily that "hardly any thing can strike the mind with its greatness, which does not make some sort of approach towards infinity" (ESB, 63), and that "Infinity has a tendency to fill the mind with that sort of delightful horror, which is the most genuine effect and truest test of the sublime" (ESB, 73). After classifying and describing the emotions characteristic of sublimity, Burke attempts to explain them physiologically, drawing on the vocabulary of associationism. Thus "Pain and fear consist in an unnatural tension of the nerves" (ESB, 132). The faculty of imagination which associates our ideas and produces works of art, is for Burke, as for Addison and Locke, "only the representative of the senses" (ESB, 17). Its limited creativity consists of representing remembered sense impressions to the mind and recombining such impressions in a new order.

While Wordsworth adopts the association of fear and love with the aesthetic categories of the sublimity and beauty, he ultimately rejects the sensationist underpinnings of Burke's theory. Fifty years ago, Samuel Holt Monk noted rightly that "despite the vestigial remains of the Burkean aesthetic in his own mind, Wordsworth escaped completely the materialistic implications of Burke's theory . . . It is in the aspirations of the human mind toward the infinite that Wordsworth finds the sublime."[9] Having rejected mechanistic and determinist paradigms for human experience in Book XI (1805), *The Prelude* concludes with a vision of "a mighty mind . . . that feeds upon infinity." In the Snowdon scene, nature offers a picture of the mind which can be read only by the poetic imagination whose gift is to discover its own presence and activity, and to sustain itself on intimations of the infinite, characterized as an "under-presence" or "Sense of God" or something "vast in its own being" (1805, XIII, 69-73). The text emphasizes, not the specific metaphysical status of the infinity that exalts the mind, but rather the efficacy of such intimations, the subjective exaltation.

In the 1850 edition, Wordsworth replaces the sensory term "image of a mighty mind" with the more cautious "type of a majestic intellect" to indicate that the infinite or transcendent cannot be represented to the senses, but only suggested to the intellect as a "dark abyss": "Its voices issuing forth to silent light / In one continuous stream" (1850, XIV, 73-74). The pronoun "Its" refers ambiguously to "abyss" and "mind," implying that the source of the phenomenal world may be the same as the source of the mind. The paradoxical and synesthetic image of "voices issuing forth to silent light" represents the breakdown of thought categories in the attempt to understand the infinite. Another important 1850 addition is the striving of this figural mind after some goal or ideal: "What it has and craves / What in itself it is, and would become" (XIV, 68-69).

After narrating the sudden vision from Snowdon, the poem classifies the natural scene, the vehicle of the vision, as "most awful and sublime" (1805, XIII, 76). The text draws particular attention to "one function of such mind," emblemized by the unity and "domination" of nature amid sublime circumstances. This function or "glorious faculty" is imagination, which "draws all things to one; which makes things animate or inanimate, beings with their attributes, subjects with their accessories, take one colour and serve to one effect" (PrW, III, 34). The sublime power or domination of nature "is the express / Resemblance" of the power of imagination. Imagination unveils the mind's connection to the transcendent by reading her own activity in the text of the sublime landscape. The heightened self-consciousness and new awareness of mental power bring the hero a much-needed repose: "sovereignty within and peace at will" (1805, XIII, 106). An immensely complicated history, both personal and public, underlies this crowning vision which attempts to reconstitute the entire *Prelude* in its own image.[10] Wordsworth began the poem as an empiricist in the vein of David Hartley and Edmund Burke, but he has ended it in his own English version of transcendental idealism. The sublime has been the means by which the poet casts off empiricism. Precisely by using the method of empiricism, the close scrutiny and analysis of experience, Wordsworth finds the possibility of transcendence, and even more important for him, the consequent possibility of hard-sought moral repose.[11]

The key to Wordsworth's discovery lies in the etymology of the word "sublime." The prefix "sub" means under. While the empiricist tends to look "outward" to external nature, and perhaps "upward" to seek more refined or transcendent ideas, Wordsworth learns by looking out-

Copyright (c) 2006 ProQuest Information and Learning Company
Copyright (c) New York University

ward to seek within himself and "under" appearances for their foundation in the mind. Hence in the Prospectus to *the Recluse*, he seeks a muse to guide him, to "sink / Deep" before "aloft ascending."[12] Here the poet contrasts, in the language of the sublime, the traditional "fear" and "awe" accorded the Judeo-Christian God "above" us with the true haunt of sublimity: "the mind of man — / My haunt and the main region of my Song" (793-94). The Prospectus summarizes what Wordsworth uncovers through his meditations on experience in *The Prelude*: the transcendent is the "under-presence" which feeds the mind's creative powers.

Kant's aesthetic of the sublime in the *Critique of Judgment* makes the same essential point: we mistakenly attribute the sublime to external objects or powers, only to discover that it is a subjective product of our mind's striving after the unconditioned, the absolute. Whereas the Burkean sublime is a simple, physiologically-induced, emotional response to an external stimulus, the Kantian sublime is a kind of dialectical process, emotion in the root sense of movement-out-of, an attraction and repulsion in the faculties of imagination and reason. While for Burke the sublime feelings of "delightful horror" are an end in themselves, for Kant the sublime is a means to a great end, insight into the soul's supersensible allegiance. The sublime is a process in which the mind is forced back on itself by a shocking or failed perception of external might or magnitude. While seemingly defeated, the mind is actually exalted in the discovery that the ideas of infinity, absolute power, and so forth, cannot be perceived; nature cannot supply the experience of them. No ocean is infinitely large, no thunderstorm absolutely powerful. Such objects inspire ideas of infinity and vastness in the mind and therefore reveal reason's capacity for independence from sensory knowledge. Such independence is fleeting and does not conform to the requirements of what Kant would call "knowledge." Yet it offers intimations of moral freedom from the causality of the material world as well as the kind of exaltation Wordsworth celebrates in his interpretation of the Snowdon vision.

Like Burke, Kant associates the beautiful with pleasure and the sublime with pain. But whereas Burke's pain is connected with feelings of self-preservation, the Kantian sublime causes pain by violating the ordinary structure of perception, by shattering the bounds of natural law or order. This sublime violation occurs in two different ways according to Kant's theory, through the mathematical or the dynamic sublime. The former results from spatial magnitude, as in the examples of a vast ocean or lofty mountains. In the mathematical sublime the imagination is unable to grasp the object, to "objectify" it or form it into a shape. The stimulus is then referred to the higher ideas of Reason (similar to Platonic Ideas but without their ontological status). The subject realizes that the infinite is a product of his own mind and far superior to the natural stimulus which thwarted his imagination. Of the mathematical sublime, Kant explains that "in the immensity of nature and in the insufficiency of our faculties to take in a standard proportionate to . . . the magnitude of its realm, we find our own limitation, although at the same time in our rational faculty we find a different, nonsensuous standard, which has that infinity itself under it as a unity, in comparison with which everything in nature is small, and thus in our mind we find a superiority to nature even in its immensity."[13]

The dynamic sublime, in contrast, arises from immense power, for example a severe thunderstorm or hanging rocks. In this case what is sublime is the mind's ability to resist the fearful or terrible might that seems to threaten the physical safety of the subject. Because we can rise above our strongest bodily fears, we realize our ability to transcend natural law. This is particularly important for its moral implications, suggesting the possibility of freewill, essential to both Kant and the later Wordsworth (1804 onward). Kant writes that the "irresistibility" of nature's might, "while making us recognize our own [physical] impotence, considered as beings of nature, discloses to us a faculty of judging independently of and a superiority over nature, on which is based a kind of self-preservation entirely different from that which can be attacked and brought into danger by external nature. Thus humanity in our person remains unhumiliated" (CJ, 101). So in both types of sublime, the higher faculties of the mind triumph over the limitations of the lower. In the mathematical sublime the infinitude suggested by reason transcends the failure of imagination, and in the dynamic sublime, the mind rises above bodily fears.

Interestingly, in his own treatise on the sublime and beautiful, Wordsworth also distinguishes between two conditions productive of sublimity. Whereas Kant attributes one to size and the other to power, Wordsworth attributes both to power. Wordsworth's first category closely resembles Kant's mathematical sublime as described above: "Power awakens the sublime either when it rouzes us to a sympathetic energy & calls upon the mind to grasp at something towards which it can make approaches but which it is incapable of attaining—yet so that it participates force which is acting upon it" (PrW, 354). The imagination fails to grasp what it reaches for, yet feels its own power in the activity of striving. Wordsworth's second case corresponds to Kant's dynamic sublime, in which the mind feels its superiority to what our sensible nature fears: "or 2dly, by producing a humiliation or prostration of the mind before some external agency which it presumes not to make an effort to participate, but is absorbed in the contemplation of the might in the external power, &, as far as it has any consciousness of itself, its grandeur subsists in the naked fact of being conscious of external power at once awful & immeasurable" (PrW, 354). To clarify this second concept of sublimity, Wordsworth cites Belial's

Copyright (c) 2006 ProQuest Information and Learning Company
Copyright (c) New York University

question to the fallen angels in *Paradise Lost*: "Who would lose those thoughts / Which wander thro Eternity?" Wordsworth emphasizes that "The thoughts are not chained down by anguish, but they are free and tolerate neither limit nor circumscription" (PrW, 355), the same feeling of freedom Kant finds in the dynamic sublime.

In explaining why the humiliation and submission to external power are sublime, Wordsworth voices a concern with man's moral status that is intimated in the Snowdon passage and very closely resembles Kant's major concern. For Wordsworth the humiliation is sublime because "our moral nature has not in the least been violated —" (PrW, 355). If the "Power contemplated" allows neither "resistance or participation, then it may confidently be said that, unless the apprehensions which it excites terminate in repose, there can be no sublimity, & that this sense of repose is the result of reason and the moral law. Could this be abstracted & the reliance upon it taken away, no species of Power that was absolute over the mind could beget a sublime sensation; but, on the contrary, it could never be thought of without fear & degradation" (PrW, 355). Here Wordsworth clearly associates the sublime with man's moral nature, a concern far removed from Burke's theory and essential to Kant's. In a very similar argument Kant explains that the sight of threatening rocks or mighty thunderstorms "is the more attractive, the more fearful it is, provided only that we are in security; and we willingly call these objects sublime, because they raise the energies of the soul above their accustomed height and discover in us a faculty of resistance of a quite different kind, which gives us courage to measure ourselves against the apparent almightiness of nature" (CJ, 101).

Kant's fundamental point about the sublime, and the one closest to Wordsworth's process of discovery in *The Prelude,* is that we mistakenly project sublimity onto external nature: "Nothing, therefore, which can be an object of the senses is, considered on this basis, to be called sublime . . . . Consequently it is the *state of mind* produced by a certain representation with which the reflective judgment is occupied, and *not the object,* that is to be called sublime" ([my italics], CJ, 89). The mind's reaction to powerful or fearful stimuli reveals its own power and strength, greater than any natural object's. Burke's skeptical and physiological empiricism makes man a passive creature, determined in his knowledge and actions by the prior experience of his senses, while Kant's aesthetic offers the possibility that man can be free and therefore moral in his actions. Both the Simplon Pass and Mount Snowdon episodes illustrate what Kant calls the "subreption" by which we attempt to locate sublimity in external nature. Wordsworth climbs Snowdon seeking upward for the sunrise, but finds moonlight at his feet, leading him to a downward vision revealed by and emblemizing the mind's creative and unifying activity. In "To William Wordsworth," Coleridge describes such subreptions: "When power streamed from thee, and thy soul received / The light reflected, as a light bestowed —."[14]

An earlier mountain climb in search of sublimity, in Book VI, marks a climax in Wordsworth's youthful relationship with nature, a point of recognition that could end the poem if it were not to include the poet's ethical and social development. But the hero's moral crisis creates a need to regain the vision of Book VI on Mount Snowdon with a chastened spirit. The movement of attraction and repulsion in the interplay of faculties that Kant finds central to the sublime reenacts itself in the narrative of the Simplon crossing. As in the Snowdon climb, Wordsworth and his friend "climbed with eagerness" (VI, 508), looking up for a "lofty mountain." The poet learns that while the obvious locus of transcendence is up toward the heavens, in fact loftiness and power are within the human mind. This downwardness and inwardness are represented doubly in the text, in the discursive apostrophe to imagination that interrupts the narrative and in the symbolic depths of the Gondo Gorge. The insight does not occur to the young Wordsworth at once. Having failed to experience exaltation when crossing the Alps, the hikers refused to believe their course "was downwards, with the current of the stream . . . for still we had hopes that pointed to the clouds" (VI, 585-87). Their expectations refuse to yield to the facts. In narrating his disappointment and confusion, Wordsworth suddenly discovers that his expectations were the locus of sublimity. Therefore, he writes, "to my conscious soul I now can say — / 'I recognize thy glory'" (1850, VI, 598-99). This revelation parallels the movement of Kant's mathematical sublime, in which "we find a different, nonsensuous standard, which has that infinity itself under it as a unity, in comparison with which everything in nature is small" (CJ, 101).

The new understanding of sublimity in the apostrophe to imagination marks Wordsworth's growing independence of the nature that has formed him. He not only recognizes his allegiance to humanity but also discovers by implication the shortcomings in the epistemologies of Locke, Hartley, and Burke. The epiphany of human mental "power" assaults the poet, overcomes him. As with the "under-presence" in the Snowdon passage, he does not specifically define this power, but suggests its value. Too skeptical to claim definite knowledge of the absolute, Kant and Wordsworth use several similar tropes to characterize the sublime and what it reveals or intimates. Both use the metaphor of an "abyss" to represent the transcendent, emphasizing its unknowableness. They prize the sublime precisely because it offers flashes of insight that are not incompatible with an empirical understanding of nature. Just as Wordsworth envisions the "awful Power" of imagination rising from "the mind's abyss" (1850, VI, 593), Kant says "The transcendent (toward which the Imagination is impelled . . .) is for the Imagination like an abyss in which it fears to lose itself" (CJ, 97). The Kantian faculty of imag-

Copyright (c) 2006 ProQuest Information and Learning Company
Copyright (c) New York University

ination is both sensory and intellectual, a crucial mediating power, as well as a formative one. But in the mathematical sublime, it attempts to extend itself beyond the limits of comprehension, seeking to grasp the ideas of infinity. Mortals can perceive and fully understand only the phenomenal world, but sublime moments offer flashes of intuition about the supersensible, which paradoxically identifies itself with the roots of mental power.

In addition to the metaphor of the abyss, Kant and Wordsworth both use the tropes of destination and home to describe what the sublime reveals. Kant writes: "Therefore the feeling of the sublime in nature is respect for our own destination, which by a certain subreption we attribute to an object of nature" (CJ, 96). Our true destination is the transcendent realm which, according to Kant, is signified by the sublime. We attribute the idea of infinity to the natural object that inspires us, but it remains an idea, unrealizable in nature. So Wordsworth, glimpsing a flash of the "invisible world," claims it as:

> Our destiny, our being's heart and home,
> Is with infinitude, and only there;
> With hope it is, hope that can never die,
> Effort and expectation, and desire,
> And something evermore about to be.
>
> (1850, VI, 604-8)

As Geoffrey Hartman has pointed out, in a different context, this marks a radical change in Wordsworth's attitude toward nature.[15] Here he locates man's true home in those qualities which set him apart from nature and natural law: his intelligence, his aspirations for transcendence, his capability for freedom.

From the apostrophe to imagination the narrative returns abruptly to the Alpine walkers who find recompense for their disappointment as they hurry "downwards . . . Into a narrow chasm" (1805, VI, 551-52).[16] The sublime descent through the Gondo Gorge is described in one long sentence whose twelve-line compound subject combines oxymorons with synesthesia to create a sense of vertigo in the reader. The experience exemplifies the attraction and repulsion of faculties and the violation of sensibility that Kant defines as part of the mathematical sublime. The images of the gorge thwart the reader's attempts to orient himself in space and time. For example, in "The immeasurable height / Of woods decaying, never to be decayed" (VI, 556-57), the word "height" impels us to look up mentally, while "immeasurable" frustrates the imagination's attempt to do so. Similarly, the "stationary blasts of waterfalls" (558) is oxymoronic, a-temporal, and non-directional; it violates the imagination's efforts to form it into a spatio-temporal representation. Finally, the perceptual stress collapses the relationship between subject and object into "the sick sight / And giddy prospect of the raving stream" (564-65). The thwarting of imagination in the text, as in the scene it describes, uncovers its normally unconscious activity, its unifying and ordering of experience. The passage concludes with a series of similes for what the sublime experience of the landscape represents, relationships of unity to multeity, eternity to time, transcendent to sensory. The imagination first fails to order the phenomena and then recovers with a momentary flash of its connection to eternity.

Many critics have recognized that *The Prelude* describes how Wordsworth's love of nature led him to transcend her claims, just as a nurturing mother guides her child to independence. What has not been recognized is that this movement occurs through the agency of the sublime, as conceived independently in Kant's aesthetic. The mind is led to seek the apparent loftiness of nature, only to fail, and in failing, to recognize that the sublime is a human invention, evidence of the spirit's independence of natural law and determinism. For Kant the imagination's "striving toward infinite progress" reveals its ability to transcend the constraints of nature and the senses. Yet it must always be remembered that "aesthetic" means "feeling." For Kant the sublime provides intimations of mental freedom, not factual knowledge of it. For both Wordsworth and Kant the sublime becomes a means to hope, to flashes of insight. This is very different from the standard eighteenth-century interest in the sublime as an end in itself: at its best producing exaltation and awe, at its worst the thrills of delightful terror.

NOTES

[1]*The Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson with the Wordsworth Circle*, ed. E.J. Morley (1957), i, 401.

[2]John Veitch, *Memoir of Sir William Hamilton* (1869), p. 89.

[3]There is some degree of critical controversy about the degree to which Wordsworth rejects empiricism, but many lines in the last few books of *The Prelude* state clearly that he repudiates mechanistic models of man and experience, determinism, and the view that the mind is a passive receiver of experience. In the 1805 version, see: VI, 666-68; XI, 270-73; XIII, 134-43.

[4]Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. J.T. Boulton (1958; rpt. 1968). Cited by ESB and page numbers.

[5]W.J.B. Owen, "Wordsworth's Aesthetics of Landscape," *TWC*, 7 (1976), 70; and the commentary on Wordsworth's "The Sublime and the Beautiful," in the *Prose Works*. See also: *Wordsworth as Critic* (1969); and "The Sublime and the Beautiful in *The Prelude*," *TWC*, 2 (1973), 67-86.

[6]William Wordsworth, *The Prelude or the Growth of a*

Copyright (c) 2006 ProQuest Information and Learning Company
Copyright (c) New York University

Poet's Mind, ed. by Ernest DeSelincourt and rev. by Helen Darbishire (1959). Cited by book number, line numbers, and 1805 or 1850. If no date is given, it is 1805.

[7]William Wordsworth, "The Sublime and the Beautiful," *Prose Works of William Wordsworth,* ed. W.J.B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser (1974), p. 11. Cited in the text by PrW and page number.

[8]See, for example: E.F. Carritt, "Addison, Kant, and Wordsworth," *English Association Essays,* 22 (1937), 26-36; Samuel Holt Monk, *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England* (1935; rpt. 1960); Walter J. Hipple, *The Beautiful, the Sublime, and the Picturesque in Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetic Theory* (1957); Herbert Lindenberger, *On Wordsworth's Prelude* (1963); and Marjorie Hope Nicholson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory* (1959).

[9]Monk, pp. 231-2. Although he does not pursue the comparison, Monk points out that while "Kant's *Critique of Judgment* is the great document that coordinates and synthesizes the aesthetic concepts which had been current throughout the eighteenth century . . . it is with Wordsworth that the *experience* that lay behind the eighteenth-century sublime reached its apotheosis" (231).

[10]In *The Romantic Ventriloquists* (1963), p. 50, Edward Bostetter criticizes Wordsworth for imposing his newfound idealism in the final book of *The Prelude* upon the whole poem as "a logical and systematic structure." Bostetter believes that Wordsworth fails to see the contradictions between his initial and later views. I would add, however, that Wordsworth's ultimate *reinterpretation* of his past experience does not alter the experiences themselves. Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Locke, and Berkeley could all look at the same orange and agree upon the sense data received. Their philosophical interpretations of the real nature of the orange and the cause of the sense data would all differ, however.

[11]The main subject of the second half of *The Prelude* is the poet's moral crisis brought on by the combination of the French Revolution's development into a war of aggression, which divided Wordsworth's loyalties between England and the freedom symbolized by France, and his personal guilt over abandoning Annette Vallon and their child. Only through a recognition of the mind's creative power and freedom is the poet able to affirm faith in "higher" reason as a moral faculty.

[12]William Wordsworth, "Prospectus to *The Recluse,*" *The Poetical Works of Wordsworth,* ed. Paul D. Sheats (1982), p. 231, (line numbers cited in the text).

[13]Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* trans. J.H. Bernard (1972), p. 101. Cited by CJ and page numbers.

[14]S.T. Coleridge, "To William Wordsworth," *Selected Poetry and Prose,* ed. Elisabeth Schneider (1961), p. 137.

[15]Geoffrey Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814* (1964), p. 51. Hartman's interpretation of the Simplon Pass episode is illuminating, but he does not read it in the context of the sublime. Furthermore, I differ with his view that for Wordsworth imagination and nature are warring contraries. In his preface, Hartman defines "apocalyptic imagination" as a faculty characterized by "any strong desire to cast out nature and to achieve unmediated contact with the principle of things" (p. xxii). Hartman argues that Wordsworth fails as a philosophic poet because he renounces imagination's hegemony after recognizing it in Book VI of *The Prelude.* His allegiance to nature is so great that he cannot abandon her. I see Wordsworth's epistemology as much closer to Kant's. While Wordsworth recognizes imagination's creative powers and striving for the infinite, he is too skeptical to believe in definite knowledge of the absolute.

[16]Thomas Weiskel, in *The Romantic Sublime* (1976) provides an intriguing psychoanalytic interpretation of the Gondo Gorge passage. He argues that the "remembered disappointment . . . is in fact a screen memory drastically inflated (if not created) in order to block the emergence of the deeper, more terrifying and traumatic memory of Gondo Gorge" (p. 200). As opposed to Weiskel's concern with the poet's unconscious, biographical motivations, and Albert O. Wlecke's in *Wordsworth and the Sublime* (1973), another psychoanalytic study, my reading seeks to recover the historical context of Wordsworth's aesthetic and its role in his *conscious* design of the poem.

Copyright (c) 2006 ProQuest Information and Learning Company
Copyright (c) New York University