

**THE "CONVERSATIONAL LYRIC"
IN COLERIDGE AND WORDSWORTH:
A STUDY OF
ARTISTIC AND PHILOSOPHICAL CONTEXTS**

by

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**“CONVERSATIONAL LYRIC”
DALAM (PUISI) COLERIDGE DAN WORDSWORTH:
SATU KAJIAN TENTANG KONTEKS SENI DAN FALSAFAH**

ABSTRAK

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) ialah seorang ahli falsafah dan sekaligus seorang penyair; namun beliau telah lama menyuarakan pandangan falsafahnya menerusi puisi sebelum mengutarakannya sebagai falsafah. Antara pandangan tersebut ialah konsepsi beliau tentang proses memperoleh ilmu pengetahuan, yang kemudiannya selaras dengan proses universal yang beliau ungkapkan, iaitu yang diberi istilah “pengindividuan”. Dalam proses ini, persepsi seseorang mengembang secara “*centrifugal*” untuk bercantum dengan Alam atau objek yang direnungi, dan kemudian kembali secara “*centripetal*” ke batas-batas diri / individu, dengan membawa suatu kesedaran tentang diri dan juga objek yang direnungi. Untuk mengungkapkan proses tersebut secara puitis Coleridge perlu mereka-cipta suatu bentuk puitis yang mempamerkan pemerolehan ilmu pengetahuan; dan untuk tujuan ini, tidak berapa lama kemudian beliau dapat memodifikasi tradisi puisi bentuk “*loco-descriptive*” yang terdahulu, dengan mereka-bentuk satu mod puisi baru, yang diistilahkan sebagai “*conversational lyric*” dalam kajian ini.

Kajian ini membuat penelitian mendalam tentang aplikasi berbentuk puitis dan falsafah yang dibuat oleh Coleridge terhadap lapan puisi “*conversational lyric*” beliau, dan kemudiannya menggunakan dapatan-dapatan berkenaan untuk mengkaji empat lagi puisi seperti itu yang dilahirkan oleh rakan seangkatannya William Wordsworth (1770-1850). Tujuan kajian ini ialah: mengemukakan satu definisi sejelas mungkin tentang mod “*conversational lyric*”; membandingkan antara amalan puitis Coleridge dengan Wordsworth

dalam mod ini; menyusur-galurkan sesetengah daripada pengaruh yang seorang ke atas yang seorang lagi; menonjolkan ciri-ciri peribadi di mana terdapat kedua-duanya mengendalikan mod puitis yang sama; dan memberikan pengiktirafan lebih kepada peranan falsafah Coleridge dalam membuat interpretasi terhadap puisi Wordsworth.

"*Conversational lyric*" ialah satu monolog dramatik di mana si penutur, iaitu si penyair sendiri, berbicara dengan seorang pendengar, dalam nada yang mesra dan agak sulit dan dalam puisi yang lemah lembut, lazimnya dalam bentuk "*blank verse*". Puisi bermula dengan deskripsi pembukaan yang padat tentang landskap sekitar, kadangkala dimuatkan juga dengan petunjuk khusus tentang masa atau tempat. Kemudian, si penutur bergerak menempuh suatu perjalanan meditatif yang membawanya dari tahap pemerhatian terhadap perkara luaran ke suatu meditasi dalaman yang melampaui masa dan tempat dan rasa fizikal, dan kemudiannya mengembalikan kesemuanya ke diri yang tadinya wujud di persada luar. Pertemuan imaginatif si penutur dengan objek yang direnunginya itu, yang biasanya berbentuk kesatuan dengan Alam, membawa kesedaran tentang "Satu Hayat" atau Tuhan. Pencapaian terakhirnya ialah satu pertambahan dalam ilmu pengetahuan, yang disahkan melalui penggunaan doa dan dalam gaya bahasa pemujaan terhadap Tuhan. Dari segi struktur puisi,³ terdapat suatu lingkaran di mana puisi berakhir di tempat permulaannya, hanya pada tahap yang lebih tinggi.

Kajian ini mendapati bahawa Coleridge dan Wordsworth secara konsisten sama-sama menerapkan unsur-unsur "*conversational lyric*", dan juga variasi yang masing-masing telah reka-cipta dalam mod yang sama. Sebenarnya, empat puisi "*conversational lyric*" oleh Wordsworth didapati lebih

tegas daripada hanya bersifat imitatif, iaitu melalui beberapa modifikasi dalaman yang dibuat oleh Wordsworth. Agak menarik apabila didapati Coleridge pula meniru-niru variasi Wordsworth dalam beberapa keadaan. Akhirnya, didapati bahawa penggunaan mod pemuisian yang direka-cipta oleh Wordsworth dimuatkan juga dengan mesej-mesej tersirat ditujukan kepada Coleridge, terutamanya semasa Coleridge sedang dilanda perasaan sedih-pilu.

THE "CONVERSATIONAL LYRIC" IN COLERIDGE & WORDSWORTH:
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ABSTRACT

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) was a philosopher as well as a poet; but he expressed some of his philosophical views in his poetry long before he stated them philosophically. Among these views is his conception of the process of gaining knowledge, which complies with his later-stated universal process that he called "individuation". Here, man's perception widens centrifugally, to coalesce with Nature or the object contemplated, and then goes back centripetally to the limits of the self, bringing about new awareness both of the self and of the object contemplated. For the poetic expression of this process, Coleridge needed to devise a poetic form that would display knowledge-acquisition; and before long he modified the older "loco-descriptive" poetic tradition for his purpose, coming up with a new poetic mode that is termed, in this study, the "conversational lyric".

This study examines in-depth Coleridge's artistic and philosophical application in his eight "conversational lyrics", and then uses its findings to examine the four such lyrics written by his friend William Wordsworth (1770-1850). The aims of the study are: setting a clear cut definition of the "conversational lyric" mode; comparing between Coleridge's and Wordsworth's poetic practices in this mode; tracing some of the influences they had on each other; highlighting their personal traits in a case where both handled the same poetic mode; and showing the need for a better recognition of Coleridge's philosophy in the interpretation of Wordsworth's poetry.

The "conversational lyric" is a dramatic monologue whereby a speaker, the poet himself, discloses to an intimate addressee, in a warm and confiding tone and in suitably relaxed poetry, usually in blank verse. The poem begins with a close opening description of the surrounding landscape, at times joined by a specific localisation of time and place. Then, the speaker sets off on a meditative journey that carries him from the observation of the outer scene to inner meditation beyond time and place and physical sense, and then brings him back to himself in the outer scene. The speaker's imaginative reconciliation with the object contemplated, usually in the form of unity with Nature, brings about realisations of the "one Life" or God. The final result is new knowledge gained, which is further confirmed by the use of prayer and the language of benediction. The poem's structure rounds upon itself to end where it began, but on a higher level of insight.

The study finds that Coleridge and Wordsworth share not only the consistent application of the "conversational lyric" features, but also variations that each of them invented within the mode. Yet, Wordsworth's four "conversational lyrics" are found to be more self-asserting than imitating, through the modifications Wordsworth made within them. Interestingly, Coleridge is found imitating Wordsworth's variations in a number of instances. Ultimately, Wordsworth's use of his friend's invented mode is found to be loaded with many messages passed onto Coleridge, especially at a time when the latter succumbed to devastating dejection.

CHAPTER ONE
BACKGROUND, LITERATURE REVIEW,
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK, THEORY,
METHODOLOGY AND OPERATIONAL TERMS

This study examines artistry and its onto-epistemological depth in the poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) and William Wordsworth (1770-1850). The study examines the lyric mode that Coleridge modified from earlier forms of poetry to embody and to exemplify his own "Theory of Knowledge". Preceded by a brief history and description of this latter theory, the study then proceeds to explore, with examples, how Coleridge used his "conversational lyric" mode to express his theory. The psychological movement as well as the thematic-structural development of Coleridge's poetry is investigated according to his "individuation" philosophy.

Then in the light of Coleridge's application, the study proceeds to examine how Wordsworth poetically imitated, and to what extent he made onto-epistemological use of, the "conversational lyric" mode that his friend invented and practiced.

The overall aims of this study are: (a) to set a clear-cut definition of the "conversational lyric" mode, (b) to see where and how Coleridge and Wordsworth practiced this mode in their poetry, compared in relation to form and content, (c) to trace some of the influences the two poets had on each other, (d) to highlight their personal traits in a case where both handled the same poetic mode, and (e) to show the need for a better recognition of Coleridge's philosophy in the interpretation of Wordsworth's poetry.

Coleridge, Wordsworth and the Romantics

The two poets of this study, generally considered as the two founders of English Romanticism, first met in 1795, although real intimacy between them actually began in mid-1797. The one year starting from then is commonly known as the *annus mirabilis* of both; and the years after it, until roughly the end of 1802, are known to have been a continuation of this great year in the extremely influential intimacy between the two poets and in the utmost collaboration they practiced in planning, if not in the actual act of composing, their works. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the two poets' collaborative publication in 1798 of their *Lyrical Ballads* marked the beginning of a new poetic era, with a new set of artistic standards. These standards were intertwined with the two poets' respective concerns: for example, Wordsworth's concern focused on the lower classes of people and their language; Coleridge's concern was with the metaphysical. Jointly the two poets' revival of the ballad form – which until that time was popular only as "folk ballads" among the less-literate sections of the English society – was off the beaten path of poets of their age and the previous age. The two poets managed to revolutionize poetic writing in a very short period of time. So, by about 1810, the worldviews which they brought into their poetic art had become examples for the younger generation of poets. Notwithstanding the differences in temperament, subject matter and style between Coleridge and Wordsworth, their *Lyrical Ballads* left an overall effect so immense, that in their life-time, they were personally able to witness the rise of a whole new generation of young, even more diverse poets influenced by them.

Besides Wordsworth and Coleridge, the group of poets commonly known as "The Romantics" includes mainly Lord Byron (George Gordon, 1788-1824), Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) and John Keats (1795-1821). Although always considered a single group, these poets never regarded themselves as a "group". On the surface, they did not have much in common; and they even frequently expressed dissatisfaction, even contempt, with the poetry of each other. Nonetheless, all of these poets shared a frustration with the dominant eighteenth-century modes of thinking and refused to stoop to the fixed standards of their age. All of them were, at least when young, true radicals; and all finally partook in the creation of a new *Zeitgeist* that was to dominate in England after the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Besides, there are a number of general features and attitudes common to the poetry of these poets that have been highlighted by critics and literary historians.

To begin with, Romantic poetry is highly distinctive in its concern with man in his true nature, often represented subjectively by the poet himself. This attitude has its roots in the belief in the natural goodness of man and in man's perfectibility, which are among the fundamentals of Romanticism. Romantic poetry, while emphasising the special qualities of each individual's mind, is committed to the individual's spontaneous and innate emotions as a source for guidance, deemed to be no less reliable than his reason. The Romantic principle of individualism esteems what is special in each man, rather than what is representative of humankind in general. Hence, the Romantics delight in self-analysis and the full exposure of the self. And hence, too, they exalt the "noble

savage", the child, the outcast and the rebel, and acclaim the atypical and the bizarre (Beckson & Gunz 1960, p. 239).

The constant concern of Romantic poetry with man often comes in the form of the Self's relation to surroundings, to Nature, and to greater powers influencing man's existence, especially God and transcendental forces beyond the visible world. The Romantic poet, in his attempt to understand and express himself, seeks to establish reconciliation between the inner vision and the outer experience, between man and Nature. He seeks a perception where the false separation of Nature and man can be reconciled in a new, synthesized vision. Consequently, the Romantic is involved in philosophy, ontology, cosmology, epistemology, and aesthetics, for these are schemes which have the legitimate function of attempting to provide order and wholeness for an otherwise-fragmented existence.

However, Romantic perception is subjected to different tensions, especially in times when man's systems of order and proportion prove inadequate. Therefore, Romantic literature is typically characterised by the prevalence of imagination, which alone can perform reconciliation between man and Nature, as well as between man and his fellow-men. In imagination, the Romantic poet finds fascinating, elevating, spontaneous and unlimited inspiration and an escape from a rational, excessively materialistic world to other, remote places and times, and to the *terra incognita* of the supernatural. The Romantic poet attempts to achieve such perceptive change in himself by first discovering the creative perceptiveness that allows him to draw aside the

veils which men have laid across their senses. By overthrowing conventional Augustan rules, rational theories of human thought and the artistic limitations long-imposed by urban gentility, the Romantic poet thus seeks to remodel the way people perceive life and surroundings.

In his commitment to the spirit of change and to the sublime, the Romantic poet seeks either exoticism or simplicity. In his search for fresh sources of spontaneous emotions, he resorts either to an imaginative world of the supernatural or to pristine Nature and the lives of simple people who are part of it. Readers and critics have often noted that Nature in Romantic poetry is not enjoyed for its superficial picturesque¹ beauty, but for mystical overtones it is endowed with, and for a universal spirit it stands for, namely a spirit reciprocally linked to the spirit of man. The uniqueness of the Romantic poet's individual experience and the burden of his exceptional vision of life eventually drive him to spiritual loneliness and social exclusiveness. In spite of his philanthropic concerns, the Romantic poet is always seen living in aloofness from his fellow-men. Solitude, especially amid the simplicities of rustic life, becomes the ideal condition for him to know himself. Conversely, life in the city and in large social organisms comes to be seen as essentially corrupting. Hence the Romantics attribute holiness and wisdom to the primitivism of those who have not been thus corrupted – hermits, rustics and children. Accordingly, within its depiction of Nature and of personal adventure, the Romantic voice thus conveys a lot of political and social issues. It rises as the voice of ultimate truth through which the Romantic "bard" articulates his struggle for a world of purpose and values.

The "Conversational Lyric" and Its Founder

The term "conversational lyric" is used in this study to refer to that form of monologues which give a close description of the peaceful surroundings around the speaker in them while unfolding the speaker's thoughts and enriching his experience. This form is the one to which M. H. Abrams gives a general description (under the name of "The Greater Romantic Lyric") in his "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric" (1965). The speaker in it, commonly the poet himself, contemplates aloud in a spontaneous overflow of thought and emotions, while addressing an intimate addressee. The style flows with suitable smoothness. The protagonist stands at the very centre of events: living everyday experiences, dealing with others, and, most prominently, communing with Nature. His mind and spirit, fully exposed to the reader, are in endless reciprocity with Nature. And he finally arrives at new, vital realizations, in a process that takes him from the surrounding natural scene on a flight of the wild imagination, to bring him back finally better-informed to the setting of the outset. This "out-in-out" psycho-ontological movement itself marks the very structure of the "conversational lyric".

A poem of this type exhibits both a continuation of earlier traditions, as well as an original Coleridgean invention through their rich philosophical purpose. Abrams (*op. cit.*, p. 204) justifies his ascription of the creation of the "conversational lyric" mode to Coleridge by stating that the latter "inaugurated [this form], firmly established its pattern, and wrote the largest number of instances;" and then the Romantics generally came to practice this form, only after Coleridge had standardized it.

Abrams (*op. cit.*, pp. 208-211) points out the remote source for Coleridge's invention as the so-called "loco" or "loco-descriptive" post-Enlightenment poems of, especially, the 17th and 18th centuries, established by Sir John Denham in his "Cooper's Hill" (1642), and later imitated mainly by John Dyer in "Grongar's Hill" (1726). These were highly "localized" poems combining the description of a scene with a combination of thought and feeling inspired by the scene (Langbaum 1971, p. 40). Then, with Thomas Gray's "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College" (1747), the form can be seen further improved as the focus of interest becomes the mental and emotional experience of a specific lyric speaker, instead of the analogical account of scenic detail.

However, Coleridge's more direct occasion for his invention of the "conversational lyric" was actually his acquaintance with William Crowe's *Lewesdon Hill* (1788), William Cowper's *The Task* (1785), and earlier and more profoundly, William Lisle Bowles's *Fourteen Sonnets* (1789) – which strongly appealed to Wordsworth, too, upon publication (Moorman 1957, p. 125; Bauschatz 1993, p. 17) ². In Bowles, Coleridge found the first genuinely unconventional treatment of Nature, the first genuine stimulus to an understanding of Nature's revelation (Shawcross's Introduction to the *Biographia Literaria*, p. xiii). For with Bowles's sonnets, the local poem was lyricized. In Abrams's words (1965, p. 213),

Bowles's sonnets present a determinate speaker, whom we are invited to identify with the author himself, whose responses to the local scene are a spontaneous overflow of feeling and displace the landscape as the centre of poetic interest; hence, the "occasional reflections" and "sentiments," instead of being a series of impersonal *sententiae* linked to details of the setting by

analogy, are meditated by the particular temperament and circumstances of the perceiving mind, and tend to compose a single curve of feelingful meditation³.

To this extent, Bowles's poetry gave the inventive inspiration to Coleridge, who managed to establish, in Abrams's words (*Ibid*, p. 216), "the persona, idiom, materials, and ordonnance" of the "conversational lyric" in accordance with what he found in Bowles, but using the intimate voice of the interior monologue instead of Bowles's "philosophical, moral, historical pronouncements translated into allegoric action by Pindaric artifice and amplified for public delivery in a ceremonious bardic voice." Coleridge put much more sincerity and philosophical depth into his new poetic mode, fusing the elements of thought, feeling and perceived object – those crucial objects which used to be merely sentimentally juxtaposed and artificially linking moral meanings to the surrounding scenery in the meditative-descriptive poems of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Langbaum 1971, p. 40)⁴.

The above discussion of the origins and the development of the "conversational lyric" reinforces the pronouncement of Coleridge as the true founder of the form. This in turn justifies the statement that Coleridge actually led the way before Wordsworth through this poetic mode, and that the latter followed, if in his own way, the steps of the former. And it is from here that this study proceeds to closely examine and compare the achievements of the two poets in the "conversational lyric" mode.

Justification of the Study

The diversity of Coleridge's prolific writings and the scattered and fragmentary nature of much of these writings have always been strong enough reasons to justify undertaking further research on this Romantic poet. Coleridge's poetry has certainly been the main treasure trove for literary researchers. Additionally, there are his bulky *Notebooks* and *Collected Letters*, and the *Biographia Literaria*, to complement those creative works. Add to these Coleridge's other writings – those which are of scientific-philosophical nature (such as the *Theory of Life and Aids to Reflection*), of socio-political and religious themes (such as *The Statesman's Manual*, the *Lay Sermons* and *On the Constitution of Church and State*), the personal periodicals (namely *The Watchman*, *The Friend* and *Table Talk*), the lectures (that range from politics to religion, to criticism, to the history of philosophy), and his *Marginalia*.

Thus, the complexity and changeability of Coleridge's temperament, and his wide knowledge of and influence by many varied sources, have caused Coleridgean studies to grow in a great abundance and diversity. Indeed, Coleridge was so outspoken and prolific that he left so much for biographers, critics, theorists, literary historians, psychologists, theologians and others to further dig into, even to this day. The study undertaken by this dissertation hopefully would add to the existing body and diversity of knowledge, mainly on Coleridge, and then throw some light on Wordsworth as well.

Both of the aforementioned well-known facts – the diversity of Coleridge's prolific writings, and the scattered and fragmentary nature of much

of these writings – would certainly merit the time-tested historico-philosophical “Aristotlean inductive-approach” of moving and analysing from the general to the particular, and possibly contribute to a sub-category of philosophical knowledge. From the perspective of Comparative Literature, however, the present study would most likely fit into, and contribute to the body of knowledge which the first-generation scholars have called “History of Ideas (through Literature)”, or the 1950’s re-coining of the term by Comparativists in Literature as “Ideas and Literature”.

Literature Review

The editing of many of Coleridge’s poetic and other works during the latter part of the twentieth century has enabled critics and literary historians to bring together and to re-evaluate his genius and achievement. Coleridgean scholarship has since fallen into many other areas of research. These mainly include, among other research fields: (a) Coleridge’s theory of literature and his practical literary criticism and speculative aesthetics, (b) Coleridge’s poetic creativity and the reasons for his fast poetic decline, (c) Coleridge’s poetic form and meter, (d) Coleridge’s philosophical/artistic sources and his influence on other poets and thinkers, (e) Coleridge’s religion and metaphysical preoccupations, (f) the growth of Coleridge’s philosophical mind, (g) Coleridge’s definitions of mental and psychological faculties of human perception, (h) the workings of Coleridge’s subconscious and imagination in his poetic masterpieces, (i) and the relationship between Coleridge’s poetic successes and his opium addiction. Much of Coleridge’s criticism has benefited from the flexible tools of psychology and anthropology. Freudian and Jungian critics have

always found Coleridge an attractive subject, many of them going to the extreme of imposing on Coleridge such theoretical frameworks as archetypes, oedipal conflicts, and repressed sexuality. Existentialist critics have highlighted what is taken to be Coleridge's existentialism in his elusive theological thought, his psycho-aesthetic theorising and the dramatisation in his poems of his personal experience of alienation.

Different aspects of Coleridge's philosophy, psychology and literary criticism (areas that, especially in Coleridge, are almost inseparable) have been dealt with by critics. While many have traced Coleridge's sources and his expansions and modifications upon those sources ⁵, many others have gone analysing his terminology ⁶, whereas some have worked on applying Coleridge's theories to his poetry. In *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Norton, 1958), M. H. Abrams devotes many passages and chapters expressly to Coleridge, discussing and analyzing the latter's theories of imagination and diction and his "Dynamic Philosophy". Then, in "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric" (1965) and *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: Norton, 1971), Abrams again points out how the philosophy of subject-object reconciliation functions centrally in some of Coleridge's poems (namely, the Conversation Poems), and calls attention to this philosophy in other Romantics, including Wordsworth.

Many critics other than Abrams have also linked Coleridge's poetry to his theories. D. B. Wilson, in "Two Modes of Apprehending Nature: A Gloss on the

Coleridgean Symbol" (1972) reads some of Coleridge's outstanding poetic passages on Nature in the light of Coleridge's *naturata-naturans* distinction. Wilson's purpose is to differentiate between imaginative symbols and metaphors of the understanding in Coleridge's perception of nature, as this perception appears in Coleridge's poetic works. Wilson ultimately gives additional evidence on the continuity of Coleridge's theory and practice. And a similar achievement is arrived at by G. M. Bernstein in "Self-Creating Artifices: Coleridgean Imagination and Language" (1979). Bernstein demonstrates how Coleridge's literary theory (especially the part related to his definition of Imagination and to the "Productive Logo") and his literary practice (particularly in the Conversation Poems) have greater intimacy and complementarity than had previously been acknowledged. This is achieved by simultaneously examining "the ontological act of creating the self and the analogous aesthetical act of creating the poem" (*Ibid*, p. 241).

Building upon Abrams's and Bernstein's findings, the present dissertation writer, in an unpublished Master's thesis entitled *Individuation in Coleridge's Poetical Works* (Muhammad 1993), has studied Coleridge's Theory of Knowledge in his prose works and poetry (building upon the argument that Coleridge's poetry is expressive of the philosophy that was forming in his mind in his poetically fertile period). Most of Coleridge's major poems, including "Kubla Khan" and "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", were proved to be wholly built on the psycho-ontological structure of Coleridge's Theory of Knowledge, and to be true expressions of a certain general mode of perception. The different forms of the self-knowledge acquired through this mode of perception,

as well as the different shapes that the process of knowing takes in Coleridge's poems, have been given full portrayal, and have ultimately been used to describe Coleridge's imaginative failure later on in life as a perceptual failure. However, the study in question did not establish any intrinsic connection between Coleridge's Theory of Knowledge and his "conversational lyric" mode in particular; nor did it attempt to see how this philosophical-poetic Coleridgean practice could have influenced Coleridge's closest friend Wordsworth, and probably other Romantics.

Indeed, a good understanding of Coleridge's thought and poetry can allow readers to see new things in the poetry of his closest friend William Wordsworth. Philosophical studies of Wordsworth have often used a comparative approach, whereby scholars have tended to associate Wordsworth with other thinkers and with philosophies prevalent in his age. And in the majority of these studies, Coleridge's philosophy appears at least in the background, if not in the foreground, when analysing Wordsworth's philosophy. The link between the two poets' thoughts is based on the collaboration and the exchanged influences between the two poets, as well as on Coleridge's wide and influential philosophical knowledge. These are among the truisms of literary history.

Newton P. Stallknecht in his *Strange Seas of Thought: Studies in William Wordsworth's Philosophy of Man and Nature* (Durham: Duke UP, 1945) relies heavily on Coleridge's well-documented dealings with philosophy (which transcended Hartley's transitory influence over Wordsworth) to unravel the

tendencies of Wordsworth's mind. Another key Romantic scholar, Melvin A. Rader, in his *Presiding Ideas in Wordsworth's Poetry* (Seattle: U Washington P, 1931) and *Wordsworth: A Philosophical Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), finds that Wordsworth's ideas (influenced by much more than associationism) resemble those of Shaftsbury, Rousseau, Spinoza, Kant, and Plato, among others. Rader takes Coleridge's great knowledge of these philosophers to imply Wordsworth's "indebtedness" to Coleridge. Stalknecht and Rader affirm, though without much precision and comprehensiveness, the influence which Coleridge practically exerted on Wordsworth. This argument, especially in relation to Coleridge's philosophical influence, has since been a commonplace both for biographers,⁷ and critics⁸ of Coleridge and Wordsworth. And the present study will validate and support the argument, keeping an eye on the philosophy in the two poets' lyrics, while comparing the artistic features of those lyrics.

Scores of Romantic studies have probed philosophical, epistemological or ontological issues in Wordsworth's poetry alongside Coleridge's⁹. Prominent among these issues is the relationship between man the observer and the object observed, or Nature. Earl R. Wasserman, for example, in "The English Romantics: The Grounds of Knowledge" (1964), examines how moral value is seen to inhere in a Romantic landscape, and how diversely the Romantics considered the relative primacy of mind and Nature. Wasserman concludes that while Wordsworth is a "subjectivist" and Keats is the antithesis, it is Coleridge who is the synthesizer of the subjective and the objective. Yet, the scrutiny of certain images that appear in Wordsworth's poetry has given critics a different picture. W. K. Wimsatt in "The Structure of Romantic Nature Poetry" (1954),

studying the constant presence of the poet's consciousness in Romantic Nature metaphors, demonstrates Wordsworth's habit of blending the perceiver and the perceived. The same case is further exemplified for by M. H. Abrams's study of such figures as Wordsworth's correspondent breeze and Coleridge's wind harp in "The Correspondent Breeze: A Romantic Metaphor" (1957). Abrams shows how these metaphors of the breeze are not only a stimulating aspect of the landscape, but also an outer correspondent, a vehicle for radical change in the poet's mind, whereby the imagery of divine inspiration is preserved to suggest both the unity of the cosmos and the divinity of the creative human mind.

The epistemological analysis of images in the poetry of Coleridge and Wordsworth is carried still further by Stephen Prickett. In *Coleridge and Wordsworth: The Poetry of Growth* (Cambridge: CUP, 1970), by analysing certain recurrent images in the poetry of the two poets, Prickett shows how those images imply a creative interaction between the eye and the object, leading to states of mental growth. The union of perceiver and perceived and the resulting mental growth are central to both poets, Prickett contends. Yet, the two poets are not clones; they largely differ as persons, as thinkers and as poets: for whereas Wordsworth's poetic creation wells up from within, Prickett observes, Coleridge's usually comes from establishing a rapport with the external world. Prickett thus modifies the distinction between Coleridge's and Wordsworth's epistemological ways, which remains unclear in Robert Langbaum's *The Poetry of Experience: The Dramatic Monologue in Modern Literary Tradition* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957). Examining Romantic poetry at large for the perceiver-perceived relation, Langbaum notices that the

Romantics generally manage to bring into conjunction both the ideal and the real in the act of perception. In this act, imaginative rationality attempts to know both itself and the external world through imaginatively projecting itself into and identifying itself with the external object, thus making the object the counterpart of its own consciousness. Ultimately, perception for the Romantics, indeed for both Coleridge and Wordsworth, is further proved by Langbaum to be a "process of experience...of self-realisation, of a constantly expanding discovery of the self through discoveries of its imprint on the external world" (p. 25). The present study follows the same stream of argument made by Wimsatt, Abrams, Prickett and Langbaum. It believes in the existence of equilibrium and a unity in the poetry of Coleridge and Wordsworth between perceiver and perceived, whereby new knowledge is reached and growth is achieved.

When considering the scholarship confined to Wordsworth, one observes studies that range within the entire canon of criticism: textual, biographical, philosophical, psychological, socio-political, religious, stylistic, etc. The 1960's and 1970's witnessed the construction of an Idealist, Cartesian- or Kantian-type of Wordsworth, concerned more with imagination than with nature or history. Building upon this base, the 1980's were occupied by post-structuralist ¹⁰ critical theories – including deconstructionist, New Historicist, and feminist theories. These often conceived of a "Romantic Ideology" whereby the Romantic poet is in flight from history and from social responsibility ¹¹. Feminist and gender critics talked about the feminine elements underlying William Wordsworth's expression of his Romantic myth of Nature and the self-identity with Nature, the search for the mother, for relationship, community, feeling and receptivity – meanings that

have to do with the traditional sexual politics of masculine domination and guilt and of feminine submission and subversion ¹². Then, in the 1990's, Wordsworthian critical scholarship witnessed (besides the older approaches, including the religious ¹³, the socio-political ¹⁴, the psycho-analytical ¹⁵ and the philosophical) the birth of the ecological approach to Romanticism which examines environmental issues in the works of the Romantics, especially Wordsworth's ¹⁶.

Wordsworth's philosophy has regained its centrality during the last decade, after a long interlude of generally insufficient attention given to it. Drawing on a number of interdisciplinary sources, Brad Sullivan in *Wordsworth and the Composition of Knowledge: Refiguring Relationships among Minds, Worlds, and Words* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), struggles with Cartesian dualisms in an attempt to develop a coherent framework for understanding Wordsworth's efforts to refigure the relationships that constitute knowing. Sullivan shows how Wordsworth achieves a mutually shaping, integrative relationship with Nature through an "ecology of mind" (in which perception, feeling, thinking, and acting are related in a continuum of mental processes). Sullivan trusts that understanding Wordsworth's method of thinking (which he propounds as one marked by recursive, self-reflexive, and synthetic approaches to knowledge, rather than by linear, logical, and "philosophical" reasoning) enables richer discussions of Wordsworth's literary theory, his philosophy, his epistemology, his social and moral purposes, and his poetic and rhetorical strategies for reaching his audience.

The "wholeness" of Wordsworth's method of creatively realising and communing with Nature is pointed out by another critic, Mary Jane Zimmerman. In "The Imagination as a Spiritual Path: Wordsworth's Integral Way of Knowing" (1999), Zimmerman argues that, in answer to the epistemological question of his day (What is the relationship of the inner mind to the outer world?), Wordsworth holds an intricate relationship (reciprocal, circular, recursive) between the creative imagination and the sensate world, or Nature. This relationship is deemed to exist in a practice that is a sophisticated knowing process which involves the perception of all the senses, emotion, thought, and contemplation. To Zimmerman, Wordsworth's experience of integral consciousness needs to be understood in a more multi-sided manner than has generally been done. Zimmerman also notes that Wordsworth's way of being in Nature, is open and receptive, both to the sensuous details about him and to the emotional and spiritual response of the inner, human psyche. The creative mind's relationship with the external world is at once complementary and antagonistic; mind and Nature are neither fused nor separate, but exist in a creative mind-nature complex wherein the mind is identified with the whole, in a state of unity within a larger underlying context of diversity. It is this identification with the whole (and with the combination of his emotion, thought and contemplation) that makes man better able to value each part, and allows him to grasp the true nature of reality in a way which rationality, in isolation, cannot. So the mind, thus shaped by reciprocity with and relatedness to Nature, can have a creative response to Nature whereby the interplay of perception and creation is a recursive loop of "participatory epistemology", one that enables the

poet, stepping back from the ego, to see more and to get a "larger-than-egoic awareness".

Objectives of the Study

This study attempts initially to describe precisely how the psycho-ontological process of self-knowledge forms the backbone particularly to Coleridge's "conversational lyric" mode. The theme, style and structure of the poem here labelled as "conversational lyric" are closely studied, especially in relation to the philosophy conveyed. Setting the definition of the "conversational lyric" is followed by specifying which of Coleridge's poems fall under the definition, and then by examining the characteristics of these poems in order to polish up the definition.

Next, this study proceeds to investigate how this Coleridgean poetic invention influenced the lyrical achievement of his closest friend Wordsworth. In its handling of Wordsworth, the present study validates and elaborates on the poet's wholeness and his reciprocity with Nature in Wordsworth's poetry, as stated by Zimmerman (1999). Yet, the elaboration made in this dissertation is simultaneously broader and more deeply focused. It is more focused because it deals with only a small group of Wordsworth's poems and aspires to make no general statements about his poetry on the whole; yet it is broader in scope than Zimmerman's because it handles more issues than epistemology, and because it holds all issues in comparison with their counterparts in Coleridge's poetry.

More directly, the present study derives from M. H. Abrams's "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric" (1965). It then aims at enlarging upon Abrams's work to come to a full perception of all the poems that Coleridge wrote in the "conversational lyric" mode (or the "Greater Romantic Lyric" in Abrams's terminology), and from there, to set a definition inclusive of all the artistic and philosophical characteristics of the poems Coleridge wrote in that mode. The study then sets out: to use the definition derived earlier for a reading of Wordsworth's poetry, to see which poems among Wordsworth's works comply with the definition, and to examine how those poems apply the mode's standard features. From the comparison of the two poet's practices in this mode, the study attempts to see in what way and to what extent Wordsworth did actually "imitate" ¹⁷ his friend Coleridge. Thus, the study will come up with conceptions about how Wordsworth used his friend's invented mode, and the reasons why he used it in the first place, highlighting the originality that both poets show in a poetic mode that both of them tried.

By undertaking these analyses, the present study attempts first to fill a gap in Coleridgean scholarship, namely by clarifying the picture of his "conversational lyric" mode, and by specifying which poems among his belong to this mode. Then, the study attempts to serve Wordsworthian scholarship by showing where in his poetry and in what way Wordsworth wrote within his friend's (Coleridge's) mode. This way, two major facts, long established as "truths" of literary history, can be redefined: the intimacy and exchanged influences between Coleridge and Wordsworth, and the general notion of Coleridge's influence over some of Wordsworth's works. Differences and

similarities between the two poets in both the artistic and the philosophical contexts are sought from the comparison of their poetic practices in the lyrical mode in question.

Finally, the definition of the "conversational lyric" mode can later be adjusted as to encompass both Coleridge's and Wordsworth's individual additions and modifications within the mode. And by setting a fine-tuned concept of this mode, the study aims ultimately at serving Romantic scholarship at large by setting a framework for the study of the "conversational lyrics" written after Coleridge's and Wordsworth's by other Romantic poets: Just as the "conversational lyric" can serve as a basis for a comparative study of the two pioneers of British Romanticism, it can also serve to compare the next generation of Romantics to each other or to their "masters". The "conversational lyric" framework can still show individual differences and similarities among the Romantics, and even among these and Victorian poets, who were greatly influenced by the Romantics.

Conceptual Framework

Between mid-1795 and mid-1802, Coleridge practiced and largely modified the "conversational lyric" pattern. His practice in this form started with "The Eolian Harp", and continued in the following years through many variations he worked out on the same pattern. These variations bear the same distinct structural, stylistic and contextual features. It is Coleridge's finalized pattern that Abrams (1965) has studied and termed as "the Greater Romantic Lyric", for which the present study has chosen the term "conversational lyric". The reason

for this choice of terminology is that Abrams's term is too abstract, while not sufficiently expressive of the content. But whereas the word "lyric" is crucial as a general description of this poetic mode, "conversational" stands surely more telling about the major characteristic which the poems in this mode share. As stated earlier in this chapter, a poem of these is unmistakably "conversational" in both attitude and expression – and hence Coleridge's description of one of these poems ("The Nightingale") as a "Conversation Poem" in the subtitle to that poem. Moreover, it is through "conversation", through dramatic monologue, that these lyrics can express their knowledge-acquisition philosophy and can portray the onto-epistemological growth which the protagonist undergoes through the poems, as discussed in Chapter Two.

It is this onto-epistemological growth, and the poetic method and pattern in which it is expressed, that this dissertation in part tries to clarify. Starting with a thorough investigation into Coleridge's philosophical-poetical application in his "conversational lyric" examples, the study reads Coleridge's poems in the light of the philosophy that was taking shape in his mind in the time when he wrote poetry and later. This examination of Coleridge's poems is done in a Formalist approach after the philosophy that stands behind the poems is explained, to exhibit in what ways this artistic mode actually served to express the profound philosophical context of Coleridge's Theory of Knowledge / self-knowledge.

After the present study sets the typical features of the "conversational lyric" according to Coleridge's practice, and in relation to his Theory of Knowledge, it will try to freshly elucidate some aspects of Wordsworth's poetry,

by reading it in the light of Coleridge's artistic and onto-epistemological application in his "conversational lyric" invention. For this comparative end, and by dealing with sources and influences, as delineated above, this work follows the French school of Comparative Criticism for its methodology, which emphasises "factual connections" (*rapport de fait*) between the elements or factors being compared – such as biographical and related data. This methodology allows for greater precision in making the necessary comparisons prior to making conclusions on the nature of "influences". The examination of artistic influences, used as the present study's methodological approach, simultaneously uses interdisciplinary scrutiny¹⁸ alongside intertextuality by also studying extra-literary (philosophical and theoretical) influence over literary (poetic) creation.

Theory, Methodology and Operational Terms

The present study, much like the previous one (Muhammad, 1993) mentioned above, falls clearly within the knowledge-category of the "History of Ideas" – whereby the general history of thought is approached *via* the use of literature specifically as both document and illustration. The study builds on the argument stated by René Wellek and A. Warren (1956, p. 111), that

... literature can be treated as a document in the history of ideas and philosophy, for literary history parallels and reflects intellectual history. Frequently either explicit statement or allusions show the allegiance of a poet to a specific philosophy, or establish that he has had some direct acquaintance with philosophies once well known or at least that he is aware of their general assumptions.

The general methodological implication of this approach (as will be explained and expounded subsequently) is the need to derive meanings of the literary texts (poetry) by "going beyond" and into the contexts as well. Beyond the initial

Formalistic or “close reading” of the selected poems, therefore, this study will thus give due attention to socio-historical contexts.

For its theoretical underpinning, the present study uses the “Grounded Theoretical Construct” to analyse the “conversational lyrics”, and explain Coleridge’s Theory of Knowledge. The “Grounded Theory” (model or approach) – popularised in the 1970’s by the Social Sciences (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and allied disciplines, such as Comparative Literature – is used here. This theoretical model makes it possible to use the data or subject of study simultaneously as the objective source for constructing the relevant analytical tools, with which subsequently to undertake detailed analyses of the data or subject matter of the study (the poems).

The “grounded theoretical construct”, the definition of the “conversational lyric” mode, and Coleridge’s practices within this mode (in the eight poems here identified as Coleridge’s “conversational lyrics”: “The Eolian Harp”, “Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement”, “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison”, “Frost at Midnight”, “Fears in Solitude”, “The Nightingale”, “Dejection: An Ode” and “Hymn before Sun-Rise”) are then used to test the four “conversational lyrics” which this study identifies among Wordsworth’s poems (“Tintern Abbey”, the Intimations Ode, “Resolution and Independence” and “Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle”).

It is important to state that this study does not deny Wordsworth’s greatness and originality, and the uniqueness of his poetic achievement. Yet, by