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THE ENDURING IMPACT OF SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

By

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"Poetry draws mankind together, breaks down barriers, relieves loneliness, shows us ourselves in others and others in ourselves. It is the friendly art. It ignores time and space. National, racial, and secular differences fall at its touch, which is the touch of kinship, and when we feel this we laugh shamefacedly at our pretensions, timidities, and reserves. Everything in antiquity is antiquated except its art and especially its poetry. That is scarcely less fresh than when it fell first from living lips. The religion of the ancients is to us superstition, their science childishness, but their poetry is as valid and vital as our own. We appropriate it, and it unites us with our fathers” (146).
- George Harper “Coleridge’s Conversation Poems”

Introduction

Not only was the French Revolution a revolt against the French monarchy, it was a revolt against traditional ideas that sparked similar intellectual revolutions throughout Europe. One of these was the British Romantic movement (1789-1832). This movement helped establish many of the conventions still present in writing today. New philosophies and ideas about the rights of the common man began to circulate, challenging age old accepted ideas about divine right monarchy. The French Revolution promoted the ideals of *liberte*, *egalite*, and *fraternite* and the British Romantics soon embraced these ideals as well.

The British Romantic poets are often split into two generations: the major writers of the first are William Wordsworth, William Blake, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge; the major writers of the second are P.B. Shelley, Lord Byron, and John Keats. Each of these poets contributed to the development of British Romanticism. Coleridge (1772-1834) is
often remembered for his collaboration with Wordsworth on *Lyrical Ballads*. The publication of the first volume in 1798 is a significant event in the history of the Romantic movement. It was in this volume that “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” was first published, arguably one of Coleridge’s most well-known poems. However, when examining the influence of the Romantics on later generations of writers, it is usually Wordsworth or members of the second generation that are discussed.

Unlike the other Romantics who dedicated their lives to writing poetry, Coleridge gave up writing poetry when he was thirty years old (“Samuel Taylor Coleridge”). Instead, he turned to prose writing and lecturing. Furthermore, although he was highly ambitious, he left several projects unfinished. These two factors may provide some explanation as to why he is often overlooked when discussing the influence of the Romantic poets. Nonetheless, the importance of his contributions is substantial. His poetry presents imagination in many forms. Academics have analyzed the different aspects of his poetry, but few have examined his literary influence over others. This paper seeks to fill gaps in the existing research regarding the influence of Coleridge’s writing on poets and authors of later generations. More specifically, it will examine the liberating effect that his work had on three major women writers: Mary Shelley (1797-1851), Jane Austen (1775-1817), and Christina Rossetti (1830-1894).

I will accomplish this goal by comparing the work of Coleridge to the work of these later poets and authors. Each chapter will contain an in-depth comparison of a poem or set of poems by Coleridge and a poem or novel by another writer from a later date. These comparisons will look at common themes, imagery, and structure. I will often draw on the work of previous academics whose focus is on one of the two works compared and
show how the features they recognize in one work are also recognizable in the other. In order to prove the overall influence of Coleridge on literature I will not only examine two of his three mystery poems, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and “Christabel,” but also his more subtle and introspective “Conversation Poems”.

I will be comparing his work to that of poets and novelists alike. Frequently, comparisons are restricted to comparing poetry with poetry. This is because of the difficulties that arise in comparing two different forms of writing, such as the novel and the poem. Consequently, a significant area of Coleridge’s influence is vastly underexplored. I overcome the difficulty of comparing poetry with novels by looking at the overall structure of the writing and the common themes and ideas they espouse, rather than starting with form.

The first chapter will look at “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. Mary Shelley was the wife of Romantic poet, P.B. Shelley, and her work espouses many of the values and themes of the Romantic era. While it is generally recognized that Coleridge’s work did influence Mary Shelley’s own writing, there is very little written in depth on the topic. There are three main points of focus in this comparison: the imagery of an icy landscape, the presence of the not-human, and the power balance associated with lack of identity.

Icy landscapes feature predominantly at the beginning of both the poem and the novel. The first point of similarity between the two is in their descriptions of the landscapes. Both descriptions convey the sense of being completely entrapped within the ice. Secondly, ice often connotes exile from society. This makes both Frankenstein and
Walton outcasts in the same way that the Mariner is an outcast. Lastly, the events that happen while the men are trapped in these landscapes follow a similar pattern.

The presence of the not-human is also a notable similarity between “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and *Frankenstein*. The not-human is a creature that appears, at first glance, to be human but, upon closer examination, is most assuredly not. The not-human is distorted in some way that makes it terrifying to those who see it. This kind of creature appears twice in the “Rime.” The first occurrence is the arrival of “Life-In-Death,” a nightmarish woman who wins the soul of the Mariner. The second appearance of the not-human is less malevolent than the first, but still disconcerting. Good spirits inhabit the bodies of the dead sailors aboard the Mariner’s ship, creating a crew of the dead to pilot the ship home. The not-human character in *Frankenstein* features prominently throughout the story. It is the Creature created by Victor Frankenstein.

Lastly, the power associated with lack of identity appears in both the novel and the poem. When a person or creature is identifiable by others, the others then have some measure of power over it. Therefore, when someone or something lacks an identity, the power balance is reversed. Since it is unknown, its weaknesses are unknown and it has power over others. Although the Mariner is the main character of Coleridge’s poem, the reader knows no more of his identity by the end of the poem than they did at the poem’s start. This lack of identity can be used to explain his almost supernatural power over the Wedding Guest. Likewise, the fact that the Creature in *Frankenstein* has no equal, no predecessor, makes it impossible to know its weaknesses. Even his creator does not know how to overcome him. The Creature appears to have unlimited power. The images of ice
and their connotations, the not-humnan, and the power found in lack of identity tie “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and *Frankenstein* together.

The second chapter will be a comparison of a set of Coleridge’s poems, referred to collectively as the “Conversation Poems,” and Jane Austen’s novel, *Persuasion*. Austen was active in the early nineteenth century and her novels have enjoyed a lasting popularity. Her relationship with the Romantics is debatable, but recent scholarship has begun to examine the likely possibility that she was influenced by them. *Persuasion* has long been considered the novel that is most Romantic in nature. The interaction between the physical world and imagination and the overall structure of the novel are similar to the interactions and structure of the “Conversation Poems.”

One of the defining attributes of Coleridge’s “Conversation Poems” is the journey from the physical world into the world of imagination. The poems often start with concrete images: outside a cottage or on a walk. As the poet observes his surroundings, he is taken on a flight of the imagination. The reader is invited along to see the world through the persona’s eyes, to glimpse the philosophies and ideas that shape the poet’s life. This focus on introspection and personal interpretation is present in *Persuasion* as well. The narrator tells the story almost entirely through Anne’s point of view. It is only Anne’s thoughts and reactions that the reader has full knowledge of; she is the one who interprets the actions of those around her. These internal thoughts are always inspired by some sort of interaction or conversation. This movement from the physical realm to the realm of imagination ties the poems and the novel together.

Secondly, there is a recognized four-part structure to the “Conversation Poems” that is also present in *Persuasion*. The four parts are: observation of the physical present
(part I), flight of the imagination (part II), intellectual speculation (part III), and a return to the physical present firm in the conclusions drawn from experiences of the second and third part (part IV). Although the different poems may have varying lengths dedicated to each part, the four-part structure can be applied to all the poems. This pattern is also apparent in the novel. Part I is the events up until Anne’s arrival at Uppercross. The reintroduction of Captain Wentworth into Anne’s life marks the beginning of Part II. The interactions between the pair at Bath is the beginning of Part III. Part IV comes near the end of the novel with Anne’s conversation with Captain Harville and Wentworth’s letter. This similarity in structure combined with the introspective nature of both the set of poems and the novels makes it possible to connect the two together.

The third chapter will look at Coleridge’s poem, “Christabel,” and Christiana Rossetti’s poem, “Goblin Market.” Christina Rossetti is a Victorian era poet and “Goblin Market” is one of her most well-known works. She came from an extremely literate family and her grandfather was a great admirer of Romantic poetry. Furthermore, by the Victorian era, Coleridge was venerated as one of the great poets of his age. The three factors that tie her work to Coleridge’s are the time of day that the major events of both poems take place, the sexual implications interwoven with fairytale qualities of both works, and the presence of a vampire.

The first key events in both poems occur under the cover of darkness, traditionally the time for supernatural occurrences in fairytales. Christabel and Geraldine’s first encounter occurs in the forest in the middle of the night. Likewise, Laura and Lizzie’s encounters with the goblins happen in the twilight. Lizzie’s warning that “twilight is not
good for maidens” (Rossetti 143) is not only applicable to Laura, but to Christabel as well. These nighttime occurrences give a fairytale like aspect to the poem.

This fairytale like quality seems to contradict any suggestions of sexual implications in the poems, but one critic presents a theory to reconcile the two ideas. Roy Basler dedicates his essay “Christabel” to studying the links between fairytales and the mystery of sex. Christabel’s nighttime journey is clearly forbidden, an example of one of these strange actions. The introduction of Geraldine fills the poem with sexual undertones, always implied and never outright stated. Lastly, because of her forbidden journey, Christabel undergoes both a psychological and physical transformation the following day. The same qualities are present in “Goblin Market.” Laura likewise goes on a forbidden journey to the goblins’ market. The emphasis on the maidenhood of the goblins’ victims suggests a sexual element. Lastly, Laura undergoes a physiological and mental transformation the day after her trip.

The transformation that Christabel and Laura undergo is one of three signs that point to the presence of a vampire. In his book, *The Road to Tryermaine*, Arthur H. Nethercot gives a list of three signs that indicate vampiric activity: the weakening of the victim, the renewed strength of the assailant, and the assailant’s later attacks on members of the victim’s family (66). As mentioned above, Christabel and Laura both undergo a mental and physical transformation the day after their encounter with their respective assailants. Furthermore, Geraldine has clearly been revitalized the morning after she spends the night with Christabel. The strength of the goblins is also directly tied to maidens eating the fruit. They are not motivated by monetary profit, so they must have some other motivation behind peddling their wares. After Laura eats the fruit, they
literally begin to suck her life away. Conversely, Lizzie’s refusal to eat the fruit seems to
drain the energy from them. Lastly, Geraldine’s subsequent power over Sir Leoline
fulfills the third characteristic listed by Nethercot. The goblins’ overjoyed reaction to the
appearance of Lizzie at the market does the same for “Goblin Market.” Darkness, the
intertwining of sexual implications and fairytales, and vampirical activity link
“Christabel” with “Goblin Market.”

Each of Coleridge’s poems or set of poems engages with the imagination in a
different form. These different forms also appear in *Frankenstein*, “Goblin Market,” and
*Persuasion*. “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and *Frankenstein* use imagination to
push the limits of the human. Imagination is employed in a different form in the
“Conversation Poems” and *Persuasion*. In these two, it is used to help gain a better
understanding of the world and ultimately ends with the persona or character in a more
confident state of mind than the beginning. Lastly, imagination helps create both the
fairy tale environments and the grave dangers of “Christabel” and “Goblin Market.” The
different forms of engagement with the imagination found in Coleridge’s poetry had an
effect on the writers and poets of later generations.

A hallmark of British Romanticism is the outpouring and application of new
philosophies and ideas. Many academics have analyzed the work of Samuel Taylor
Coleridge, but there has not been much research on his influence over later generations of
writers. I aim to fill this gap in the research by comparing Coleridge’s poems to the work
done by three later writers: Mary Shelley, Jane Austen, and Christina Rossetti. It is
important to understand this influence because, as William Deresiewicz points out in his
book, *Jane Austen and the Romantic Poets*, the nature of influence is “not a shackling of
consciousness into imitative postures, but a startling of the imagination into the pursuit of new possibilities” (4). His poetry presented motifs, structures, and ideas on the different forms of imagination that had a liberating effect on the work of women writers in the nineteenth century. I address the difficulties that arise when comparing poetry to novels by looking at common themes, images, and overall structure. Using these comparisons, I will prove that Coleridge’s writing had a lasting impact on literature.
Chapter One:

Ice, Not-humans, and Identity in “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and *Frankenstein*

At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God’s name (“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” 63-66).

We perceived a low carriage, fixed on a sledge and drawn by dogs, pass on towards the north, at the distance of half a mile: a being which had the shape of a man, but apparently of gigantic stature, sat in the sledge, and guided the dogs...This appearance excited our unqualified wonder (Shelley 35).

The British Romantic era of literature has given the world some of its most iconic works of literature. Two of the most well know of these are Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. “Rime” was first published in the 1798 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* and published in subsequent editions with multiple alterations. *Frankenstein* was first published anonymously in 1818. There are few who have not at least heard of *Frankenstein* if not read the novel. Both works still appear in contemporary culture as evidenced by the roughly four hundred films influenced, in some manner, by the novel (Curran) and at least two influenced by the poem, as well as a musical adaption of the “Rime” by the British heavy metal band “Iron Maiden.” It is recognized in the academic community that Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s
writing had a profound influence over that of Mary Shelley. However, the research done on this influence is severely limited and ignores such aspects as the presence of icy landscapes in both works, the presence of the not-human, and the power balance associated with lack of identity.

Researchers cannot seem to agree on why this gap is present. Sarah Webster Goodwin asserts in her essay, "Domesticity and Uncanny Kitsch in 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner' and Frankenstein," that the reason for the gap is "largely because they [the two pieces] have been understood in the most accessible terms as part of Mary Shelley's indictment of the male Romantic poet" (99). Beth Lau, after citing this passage in her essay, "Romantic Ambivalence in Frankenstein and 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,'" presents a counterargument claiming that "far from being a target of disapproval, Coleridge was a profoundly sympathetic and congenial figure to Mary Shelley, and his ideas and literary themes resonated with and helped shape her own" (209). She believes that the reason that the similarities are so rarely discussed is because Mary Shelley's works are more often compared to those of her husband and her parents, all renowned writers.

Some scholars are even able to see traces of other works of Coleridge in Mary Shelley's work, which supports Lau's claim that Coleridge and Shelley were sympathetic to one another. For example, the Leslie Ann Minot and Walter S. Minot see traces of Christabel" in Frankenstein and cite several similarities in their essay "Frankenstein and 'Christabel': Intertextuality, Biography, and Gothic Ambiguity." Tracy Ware also notices Coleridge's influence in "A Note on Frankenstein and 'Frost at Midnight,'" but she draws the parallels between the novel and "Frost at Midnight," one of Coleridge's far less
abstract and mysterious poems. While it is unclear why the gap is present, all the authors agree that Coleridge influenced Mary Shelley.

Blogger and English Literature student, Madison Anhorn, recognizes the parallels between the “Rime” and *Frankenstein* and has devoted an entire blog to pointing out the influence of Coleridge over Mary Shelley. She draws the parallel of the presence of the human but not human in both stories. She even suggests similarities between the Creature and the Mariner, both of who are kept alive by supernatural means. She hits on the idea that the ideas were meant as a warning against pushing the boundaries of nature, an idea that Michelle Levy also acknowledges in her article, "Discovery and the Domestic Affections in Coleridge and Shelley."

Furthermore, in her article "*Frankenstein* in the Classroom," Gladys Veidemanis notes the benefits of using the two works of literature as a teaching tool. This entire article is focused on the benefits of using *Frankenstein* in the high school classroom. She brings up the idea of teaching it at the same time as the “Rime.” She points out the multiple narratives as one key similarity that can be discussed. She draws parallels between the actual characters in the story as well, pointing out that both the Mariner and the Creature have an appreciation of natural beauty. On page sixty-four, she makes a very brief reference to the presence of the icy landscape in *Frankenstein*. This reference is only in a list of the different landscapes that appear in the novel and there is no mention made of their use in the poem. Michelle Levy sees the pieces as teaching tools as well, but designed not for a modern high school or college classroom, but for a culture obsessed with discovery and colonization. She argues that both authors portrayed domesticity as the ideal form of happiness in their works. They took on the popular
format of a discovery narrative, but showed the negative consequences of the discovery rather than the positive ones.

One striking similarity worth noting in both works is the use of the symbolism of icy landscapes and the events that happen on these landscapes. Veidemanis writes in her essay “When... pursuing the monster, Frankenstein... journeys by dog-sled through ‘wild and mysterious’ Arctic wastes” (64). She goes on to say that this symbolizes isolation caused by pursuing knowledge beyond the natural boundaries. Ice is often used in writing as a symbol of isolation from domesticity and being an outcast from society. Applying this idea of ice, the reader can view Frankenstein, Walton, and the Mariner all as outcasts.

Robert Walton, the explorer trying to find a passage to the North Pole, describes the ship’s situation as: “surrounded by ice, which closed in...on all sides” (Shelley 34). The Ancient Mariner in Coleridge’s poem says of the ice: “The ice was here, the ice was there, / The ice was all around” (“Rime” 59-60). In both passages, the emphasis is on being surrounded by ice. The speakers are sure to impress upon their listeners the vastness of the ice, the feeling of being utterly trapped by the ice. This impression is reinforced in Frankenstein when the ice is described as “stretched out in every direction...[it] seemed to have no end” (Shelley 34). The use of the phrases “all around” and “no end” are effective in portraying the seemingly never-ending fields of ice. The descriptions in both the poem and the novel convey a sense of the isolation that the people trapped in the icy landscapes felt.

Also important to note are the events that happen to the men in both works when they are trapped at the Poles. In “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” an Albatross comes out of fog (Coleridge 63-64). Likewise, when the mist clears in Frankenstein, Walton and
his crew catch a glimpse of the Creature racing across the ice (Shelley 35). Both accounts have a note of optimism. The Albatross is hailed as a sign of good fortune and welcomed by the crew. While the Creature in *Frankenstein* does not approach the ship at this point, the crew takes his appearance as a good sign that they may not be so far from land as they had previously thought. The Albatross and the Creature later become a focal point in the respective stories. While both are initially hailed as signs of good fortune, as the stories develop it is revealed that they are connected in some way with death and destruction.

Death and the supernatural also figure predominantly in the “Rime” and in *Frankenstein*. This is especially noticeable in the presence of the not-human. The not-human is a being that appears to be human but upon closer examination is not, it is distorted in some way that makes it terrifying to behold. Anhorn touches on this in her blog when she states that “both works draw a distinct line between body and human” (“The Curse of the Corpse”). The not-human may possess a human body, but that does not mean that they are human.

One instance of the presence of the not-human in the “Rime” is when spirits finally take pity on the Mariner and help him return home. The Mariner’s curse is lifted when he blesses the sea snakes and good spirits come to help him. The spirits possess the bodies of the dead crew and they begin to work the ship. Although the outcome is good, the crew is still an example of not-humans. The Mariner says, “They raised their limbs like lifeless tools - / We were a ghastly crew” (Coleridge, “Rime” 340-341). It becomes even more unsettling when his nephew’s body, the only kin that the Mariner ever mentions, works beside the Mariner. The nephew says nothing nor even acknowledges his uncle. This is not only a distortion of the familiar human form but a distortion of
familial relations. The Mariner recognizes his nephew's body walking about but at the same time it is not his nephew.

Another example of the not-human in the "Rime" are Life-in-Death and Death. The ship the Mariner is on is becalmed and a ghost ship appears. The crew initially hails it, thinking they are rescued, but their delight soon turns to terror as the ship and its two passengers come into view. The description of Life-in-Death is a good example of a not-human:

Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Nightmare Life-in-Death was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold. (Coleridge 190-194)

She clearly has a human body with lips, hair, and skin but she is obviously not a human being, but a supernatural creature. This warping of the familiar female features is thrown into even starker contrast by the description of the bride earlier in the poem. The bride is fresh, alive, and human, "red as a rose is she" (Coleridge, "Rime" 34), which serves to emphasize the deathlike paleness of Life-in-Death. The distortion of the familiar human body makes her all the more terrifying to the Mariner and the reader. The Mariner and crew's terrified reaction is paralleled in the terror Frankenstein feels after bringing his Creature to life.

This Creature has a completely human body that Frankenstein put together with great care. He regards it as beautiful saying "His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful" (Shelley 60). His reaction just mere minutes later, after
animating the Creature, are in direct contrast to this: "Oh! No mortal could support the horror of that countenance" (Shelley 61). When it becomes living, he is horrified by it. It looks like a human but at the same time is not. He is terrified and tries to abandon the Creature because he cannot stand the presence of something that is so human but at the same time is not. This returns to Anhorn’s point of there being a distinction between what is a body and what is human.

The last point to be developed is the balance of power associated with identity and lack of identity in both works. People naturally have a desire to identify things. The organization of the human mind plays a big part in why a name and identity is so important. One theory of language suggests that the mind is organized into a mental lexicon. A mental lexicon is an individual’s vocabulary and understanding of language (Murphy 4). For each word there is a definition and a list of its attributes. If something does not have an identity, it cannot be defined, and it cannot be known.

Although the Mariner tells a long and elaborate story, the reader knows very little about who he actually is. Granted, none of the characters in Coleridge’s poem have names but they all have some sort of identity except the Mariner. For example, the Wedding Guest is a young man who is a close relation to the bride. He is probably well off in society because his close relative is having a large wedding. We do not know anything about the Mariner’s history, nationality, or relations to anyone. The one hint is that he was on the ship with his nephew but there is nothing said about the nephew that gives us a clue to the Mariner’s identity. There is no indication as to when the events the Mariner is relating happened or how many times he has related this story. Oddly enough,
even when the Mariner's tale is over, the reader still does not know anything about the actual Mariner.

The Mariner has some sort of unexplainable power over the Wedding Guest. In the first four stanzas of the poem it is evident that the Wedding Guest is not a willing listener. He is angry at the Mariner for stopping him, but strangely enough he cannot escape the Mariner's power. Coleridge makes this clear when he says that the Wedding Guest "cannot choose but hear" ("Rime" 18) the Mariner's tale. The reader does not forget that the Wedding Guest is being held by some strange power as there are multiple interruptions by the Wedding Guest. He often expresses his distress at not being with the wedding party. He also says that he is afraid of the Mariner but still he is unable to leave. The powerlessness of the Wedding Guest against the Mariner is also seen in Frankenstein's powerlessness against the Creature. Although Frankenstein expresses his desire to destroy the Creature, he is unable to do so.

A quick internet search of the keyword "Frankenstein" will reveal images of the Hollywood version of Frankenstein's monster. The name Frankenstein has come to automatically be associated with the image of a creature with a square head, green skin, clumsily stitched together limbs, and bolts coming out of his neck. But this is not Frankenstein. Frankenstein is a natural human being who created a creature. Society has given a name and an identity to Mary Shelley's nameless creature. Even people who are aware that the Creature has no name still accidentally call him Frankenstein. The reason for this is simple: people want to be able to identify the Creature because if they cannot, it has power over them.
Take for example another famous book turned into a horror movie: Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. In *Dracula*, it is not until an expert on the supernatural, Van Helsing, has identified the threat as a vampire that any sort of strategy is taken either in defense or offense. Because the threat has been identified, so has its abilities and weaknesses. Unfortunately for Mary Shelley’s characters, there is no one to help them identify the Creature or help them overcome it. It is entirely new and therefore has no identity. If something has no identity, it cannot be understood nor overcome; it has no weaknesses and no limits.

This is part of the reason why the namelessness of the Creature is so frightening. There has never been anything like him before; there is nothing to which he can be compared. He cannot be placed in any sort of category except for the category of the unknown and there is no way to defend oneself against the unknown. Hollywood tries to offer a solution by naming the Creature and showing him as a senseless brute who can be controlled and destroyed by fire. Now the Creature is identified. A mute, unfeeling brute that is afraid of fire is far less scary than an intelligent, logical, and passionate creature whose limits are unknown.

It is this lack of knowledge and identity that gives the Creature power over Victor Frankenstein, who has a very well-established identity. Although Frankenstein created the Creature, he does not know how to destroy it. When he first sights the Creature in the mountains he resolves “to wait his approach, and then close with him in mortal combat” (Shelley 93). But only moments before, he acknowledged the physical superiority of the Creature when he says: “I suddenly beheld the figure of a man, at some distance, advancing towards me with superhuman speed. He bounded over the crevices in the ice,
among which I had walked with caution; his stature, also, as he approached, seemed to exceed that of a man” (Shelley 92). Even though Frankenstein vows to avenge the deaths of his friends and family, he does not appear to have any other goal except pursuit of the Creature. He tells Walton of his vow of vengeance made in the graveyard, but he never explains what he will do when he catches the Creature. It is because the Creature has no identity that Frankenstein is bound to silence. He cannot explain what the Creature is nor what can be done about it. When he does attempt to explain to the magistrate, he is treated like a madman. It is Victor’s inability to understand and identify the Creature and its limits that allows the Creature to gain control over him.

Conversely, it is Frankenstein’s identity and the Creature’s knowledge of him that give the creation power over his creator. Using papers found in the pocket of the clothes the Creature took from the laboratory, the Creature learns of his creation and, more importantly, his creator. He learns where to find Victor based on these papers. Just Frankenstein’s name, learned from papers found in the pocket of the clothes in the laboratory, is enough for the Creature to identify Victor’s brother, William. When William uses his father’s name in an attempt to frighten the Creature, the Creature exclaims: “Frankenstein! you belong then to my enemy, - to him towards whom I have sworn eternal revenge; you shall be my first victim” (Shelley 127). The Creature gives Victor the identity and title of creator and expects him to act accordingly. When they meet in the mountains the Creature demands Victor to “do your duty towards me” (Shelley 93). He asks Frankenstein to make a female creature as hideous as himself to be his companion. The Creature believes that Frankenstein has a duty to ease his suffering and to bring happiness into his life. When Victor destroys the female creature, the
Creature again uses his knowledge of Victor’s life to get revenge. The Creature knows of Victor’s close friendship with Clerval and kills him because of Frankenstein’s actions. He also knows of Victor’s love for Elizabeth and kills her on hers and Victor’s wedding night, so that Victor will know the isolation felt by the Creature. It is the Creature’s knowledge of Frankenstein’s identity that allows him to enact his revenge.

Although it is generally agreed upon in the academic community that Coleridge’s “Rime of the Ancient Mariner” had some influence over Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, there are still some areas that have not been thoroughly researched and looked into. These include the use of ice as symbolism in both works and the events that happen on the ice, the presence of the not-human, and the power associated with namelessness. Studying these common areas allows a better understanding of just how deeply these two works are linked. Both works use imagination to explore and push past the limits of human nature. The human characters are outcasts from society and find themselves in situations that push the boundaries of the natural.

The symbols and themes that Coleridge employs in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” provided imaginative inspiration for Mary Shelley during the composition of *Frankenstein*. Mary Shelley composed *Frankenstein* during the British Romantic period and was associated with other second generation Romantic poets. The influence of Coleridge’s use of imagination did not only bridge the gap between the two generations of British Romantics, but was also felt by writers outside the traditionally acknowledged Romantic canon. One such author was Jane Austen, who was active at the same time as the Romantics but is not traditionally listed in their number.
Chapter Two

Imagination and Structure in the “Conversation Poems” and Persuasion

No waste so vacant, but may well employ
Each faculty of sense, and keep the heart
Awake to Love and Beauty! (“This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison” 62-64)

An interval of meditation, serious and grateful, was the best corrective of every thing
dangerous to such high-wrought felicity; and she went to her room, and grew steadfast
and fearless in the thankfulness of her enjoyment (Austen 252)

Jane Austen was actively writing during the end of the eighteenth and beginning
of the nineteenth century but her novels have not traditionally been considered part of the
Romantic school. However, recent scholarship has begun to consider Austen’s potential
connections to the Romantics. This scholarship has primarily focused on her connections
with the second generation of the Romantics, but relatively little has focused on her
relationship with Coleridge’s work. This is strange considering how much of his work
was published around the same time that she began to write. A group of poems by
Coleridge, know collectively as the “Conversation Poems,” were published by 1802. One
of Austen’s last novels, Persuasion, has been considered the most Romantic in character
(Thomas 893). As Keith Thomas points out, Austen was an avid reader and had access to
a wide range of books, both in her father’s library and from circulating libraries (921). It

1 It is believed that she began writing Juvenilia around 1787 and had an early draft of Sense and Sensibility
completed before 1796. However, her first novel was not published until 1811 (Warren).
is logical to believe that she had read and was familiar with the “Conversation Poems” by the time she finished writing *Persuasion* in 1816. The interaction between the physical world and the imagination and a similar structural layout link *Persuasion* to the “Conversation Poems.”

Coleridge is most known for his fantastic and mythical poems, such as “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” “Christabel,” and “Kubla Kahn.” However, he also wrote a notable series of poems that critics have labeled “Friendly Pieces” (Harper 146) or more commonly, “Conversation Poems.” Coleridge himself came up with the label, but only applied it to one of the poems, “The Nightingale.” Since then, readers and critics have identified certain elements in “The Nightingale” that appear in other poems and created a group of eight poems that fall into this category. These poems are “The Æolian Harp,” “Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement,” “This Lime-Tree Bower,” “Frost at Midnight,” “Fears in Solitude,” “The Nightingale,” “Dejection: An Ode,” and “To William Wordsworth.” George Harper was the first to write about the shared characteristics of these poems in his essay “Coleridge’s Conversation Poems.” He explains that these poems are significant because, unlike the poet of the three mystery poems who remains unquestionable and aloof among the stars, “the Poet of the Friendly Pieces lingers among us and can be questioned.” (Harper 146). Harper’s focus is on establishing the common attributes of the “Conversation Poems.” Since the publication of Harper’s essay in 1928, many other critics have written about the elements of the “Conversation Poems.”

M.H. Abrams made the “Conversation Poems” the focus of his essay “Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric.” He argues that Coleridge developed and

Critics have also begun re-examining Austen’s relationship to the Romantics in recent years. As William Deresiewicz points out in *Jane Austen and the Romantic Poets*: “that Austen had affinities with, and was even influenced by, the Romantic poets, is not as strange an idea as it once would have seemed. For a long time, Austen and the Romantics occupied two different critical worlds...[but] more recently...connections between Austen and romanticism have been traced in a number of ways.” (3). He argues that it is illogical to believe that Austen was unfamiliar with the work of Wordsworth and Coleridge, but believes that, of the two poets, it was Wordsworth who had the greater influence on her writing. Coleridge is not to be disregarded, but he is not a major influence in his own right. Rather, his work contributed to Austen’s understanding “Wordsworthian-Coleridgian ideas and themes” (Deresiewicz 8).

Unlike Deresiewicz, Thomas argues that Coleridge’s “Conversation Poems” had a direct influence over *Persuasion*. While the influence of the “Conversation Poems” on later poets has often been observed, Thomas is the first to extend this observation to Austen. Uncertainty about Austen’s familiarity with the poetry of the Romantics is one
reason for this absence. As Thomas points out, some critics have compared parts of *Persuasion* to Keats and Shelley. However, behind these comparisons “is a problematic historical point. Although it is possible that Austen read Keats (though certainly not "To Autumn") and some Shelley, she would most likely not have read them in time to affect the composition of *Persuasion*” (Thomas 893). In order to connect *Persuasion* with any Romantic poetry, the poetry must have been published before Austen began work on the novel. Thomas asserts that it is a “well-documented fact that she was an avid reader and purchaser of several of the latest publications, including works by Scott, Southey and Byron” (921). He concludes that her reading habits, her father’s extensive library, and her membership in circulating libraries gives every indication that Austen was familiar with Romantic poetry. He then moves on to support his argument by examining the focus on the speaker’s consciousness and the relationship between the subject and the other in both the poems and the novel.

Although they disagree on how much of an influence Coleridge had Austen’s work, both Deresiewicz and Thomas agree that Austen was familiar with his work. Apart from “To William Wordsworth,” some form of each of the “Conversation Poems” had been published by 1802. “To William Wordsworth” was published the same year that Austen died, making it highly unlikely that she had ever read it and impossible for it to have influenced her writing of *Persuasion*. For this reason, it will not be included in this analysis. Alethea Hayter points out in her essay, “Xanadu at Lyme Regis,” that Jane Austen was “altering and revising the text of the novel [*Persuasion*] right up to August 1816” (61-62). This gave Austen fourteen years to become familiar with the poems. Deresiewicz’s and Thomas’ conclusions combined with the fourteen-year period between
the publication of the “Conversation Poems” and the completion of *Persuasion* support the high probability of Austen’s familiarity with Coleridge’s work. Unlike the three mystery poems, which had no precedent in eighteenth and nineteenth century British literature, the “Conversation Poems” were partially influenced by some of Coleridge’s contemporaries. In 1789, another eighteenth century poet, William Bowles, published a series of sonnets. The sonnets usually began “with a rapid sketch of the external scene--frequently, as in so many of Denham’s progeny, a river scene--then moves on to reminiscence and moral reflection. The transition is often managed by a connecting phrase which signalizes the shift from objects to concepts and indicates the nature of the relation between them” (Abrams). Coleridge was impressed by this volume of poetry and began trying to imitate it in his own work.

His first success was the “The Æolian Harp.” Coleridge surpassed Bowles’ work and began experimentation of his own in the Romantic lyric. The Romantic lyric was a creation of the early nineteenth century, so influential that “for several decade poets did not often talk about the great issues of life, death, love, joy, dejection, or God without talking at the same time about the landscape” (Abrams 529). Abrams claims that Coleridge “inaugurated the greater Romantic lyric, firmly established its pattern, and wrote the largest number of instances” (530). Coleridge himself later acknowledged the significance of his contribution in an annotation in a late proof copy of *Sibylline Leaves*:

Coleridge wrote on the page that began ‘The Eolian Harp’: Let me be excused, if it should seem to others too mere a trifle to justify my noticing it – but I have some claim to the thanks of no small number of the readers of poetry in having first introduced this species of short blank verse poems – of which Southey,
Lamb, Wordsworth, and others have since produced so many exquisite specimens.” (Magnuson 32)

It is for this reason that any influence of the Romantic lyric over later writers may be attributed to Coleridge’s work.

The interaction of the physical world with the internal musings and the imagination of the persona is one hallmark of the “Conversation Poems.” “The Æolian Harp” begins with Coleridge and his wife, Sara, sitting beside their cottage. The poem then moves on to describe the harp “placed length-ways in the clasping casement” (Coleridge, “Æolian Harp” 14). Up to this point, every image has been concrete. However, with the mention of the harp, the poem shifts to internal meditation. The sound of the breeze playing on the harp sends the persona into a world of imagination filled with “twilight elfins” journeying from a fairy-land filled with “honey-dropping flowers” and “birds of Paradise” (Coleridge, “Æolian Harp” 21-24). This fanciful description is a far different picture than painted in the first stanza of the cottage overgrown “with white-flowered jasmin, and the broad-leaved myrtle” (Coleridge, “Æolian Harp” 4) with the bean-field nearby and the sea in the distance. The reader now has a glimpse into the mind and imagination of the persona.

The image of the harp further inspires him to meditate on the interconnectedness of all life. He wonders “what if all of animated nature / Be but organic harps diversely framed” (Coleridge, “Æolian Harp” 44-45) with “one intellectual breeze” (Coleridge, Æolian Harp” 47) sweeping over them all. These lines take the reader deep into the persona’s thoughts and personal philosophy. The harps and the breeze are a metaphor for the One Life, an interconnectedness between human, nature, and God. As Orel points out
“his repeated image of an Eolian harp is more than poetical image; it is acute self-analysis” (68). Although the poem begins with very concrete images, the reader is invited on a journey of imagination and discovery of the persona’s personal philosophies.

A second example of this journey from the physical realm into the realm of imagination and beyond can be found in “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison.” The first stanza begins with two very concrete images. The first of these is the persona sitting alone in the lime-tree bower. The second takes place in his mind and helps make the shift from the physical world into imagination. The persona wonders whether his friends have walked down to “the roaring dell, o’erwooded, narrow, deep” (Coleridge, “Lime-tree Bower” 10). It is a place that he has told them about and has obviously visited often himself. Although he is not present with his friends, he gives details about the trees, the waterfall, the “dark green file of long lank weeds” (Coleridge, “Lime-tree Bower” 17) and the “blue clay-stone” (Coleridge, “Lime-tree Bower” 20). Although he uses descriptive language, there is nothing fanciful about his description of the dell.

The next stanza sees a shift in the voice of the persona; he goes from wondering where his friends are walking to commanding their walk in his imagination. He had thought that “perchance” they had gone to visit the dell, but in this stanza he has taken command of the fantasy: “Now, my friends emerge” (Coleridge, “Lime-tree Bower” 21). He creates a world in which Charles, his friend, wanders through glad to be united with Nature. The persona no longer describes the scene, he commands it:

Ah! Slowly sink

Behind the western ridge, thou glorious sun!

Shine in the slant beams of the sinking orb,
Ye purple heath-flowers! richlier burn, ye clouds!

Live in the yellow light, ye distant groves!

And kindle, thou blue ocean! (Coleridge, “Lime-tree Bower” 32-37)

The scene as well as Charles’ reaction to it take place entirely in the mind of the poet. These fantasies then lead the persona to deeper internal musings regarding his own situation. He thinks about the importance of connection to nature and the happiness that one can draw from it.

These shifts from the physical world into the realm of imagination and philosophy are one of the characteristics found in all of the “Conversation Poems.” Although these poems make broad philosophical observations, they are also intensely personal. For a brief moment, they offer the reader a glimpse into the poet’s soul and mind. The reader has the opportunity to feel and see things in a way that was unique to the poet. Austen achieves a similar effect with her narrator in Persuasion. Far from being an omniscient narrator, the story is told almost completely from Anne’s point of view. As Thomas points out “The narrator may objectively present the characters’ actions and dialogue, but the only interpretation and penetration of character, motivation and behavior we are given are Anne’s” (901). The reader sees the world through her eyes. It is her interpretations of the actions of others, her thoughts, imaginings, and feelings, that dominate the story.

This style is present throughout the novel, but the clearest example is her thoughts and interactions with Captain Wentworth. Thomas explains that the method “for forming imaginations, whether wild or correct, is the same in the novel as in the lyric. It consists in making inferences from the general to the particular” (904). An early example of this is Wentworth’s statement to Henrietta Musgrove upon his seeing Anne for the first time in
eight years. Anne moves from the general statement made by Wentworth to a very particular, though potentially incorrect, inference. Henrietta repeats the statement Mary who passes it on to Anne, saying that he “is not very gallant by you Anne...he said, ‘You were so altered he should not have known you again’” (Austen 94-95). Although Mary, always anxious to elevate herself at the expense of Anne, prefaces the story by saying that Wentworth is not gallant towards Anne, Anne takes this interpretation to the next level. The narration moves from relating the conversation between Anne and her sister to Anne’s imagination. Anne believes that Wentworth sees her as “wretchedly altered,” that “he had not forgiven” her for giving him up and showing weakness of character, and that “her power with him was gone for ever.” (Austen 95). Just as the persona in “The Æolian Harp” and “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison” moves from the concrete to their own imaginings, Anne also moves from an actual conversation to her own personal interpretation. The reader is not privy to the conversation between Henrietta and Captain Wentworth nor to the conversation between Mary and Henrietta. There is no other way to interpret this conversation other than through Anne’s point of view.

It is not until Anne takes control of her imaginings and begins to interpret Wentworth’s actions as affectionate toward her that the reader can be truly sure of his feelings. Once again, Anne moves from the general statements of Wentworth to her own particular interpretation of them. However, this time, her imaginings are correct and are later confirmed beyond all doubt by Wentworth. The conversation between the two in the octagon room in Bath is an excellent example of this. The conversation moves from a discussion of the unfortunate events at Lyme to the engagement of Louisa Musgrove and Captain Benwick and finally to Anne’s expressing a desire to return to Lyme one day.
Following the end of this conversation, Anne’s mind journeys from the octagon room into the world of her imagination: “Anne saw nothing, thought nothing of the brilliancy of the room...She was thinking only of the last half hour” (Austen 202).

The reader takes this journey with her and soon interprets the conversation the way that Anne has. Everything about the conversation, Wentworth’s “choice of subjects, his expressions, and still more his manner and look” (Austen 202), is viewed through her eyes. The narrator does not offer Wentworth’s reason for stopping mid-sentence when speaking of the Musgroves’ approval of Louisa’s marriage nor the thoughts passing through Wentworth’s head when speaking of Benwick’s recovery from heartbreak. It is speculated that the former is brought about by a recollection of his own engagement to Anne and the regrettable circumstances involving her family’s disapproval. Wentworth’s inability to comprehend Benwick’s swift recovery from heartbreak over the late Fanny Harville is interpreted as proof of his own inability to recover from the heartbreak of losing Anne. In turn, this is used as evidence that he still has a strong attachment to her. His “half averted eyes and more than half expressive glance” can mean only that he has “a heart returning to her” (Austen 202). The reader can only conclude, like Anne, that the meaning of this conversation is that Wentworth still loves Anne.

Anne’s imaginings may not be flights into fairy land, but are still journeys into a world of her own making. Similar to the personas of Coleridge’s “Conversation Poems,” the narrator often moves from concrete conversations in physical locations, such as cottages or parlors, to the world of Anne’s imagination. This world is dominated by Anne’s interpretations of the actions and words of others, regardless of the true motivation behind them. As Thomas points out, by supplementing the conversation with
the signs Wentworth gives, Anne can “further elaborate its meaning and thus confirm” (904) her imaginations. The personas of the “Conversation Poems” also use objects and events from the concrete world to form and confirm their convictions. The movement from the physical world to the world of imagination links Coleridge’s “Conversation Poems” to *Persuasion*.

Another shared characteristic of the poems and the novel is their structural layout. Harper was the first to recognize the structure of the “Conversation Poems.” In regard to “Reflection on Having Left a Place of Retirement,” Harper writes that “the poem begins with a quiet description of the surrounding scene and, after a superb flight of imagination, bring the mind back to the starting-point, a pleasing device which we may call the ‘return’” (148). He also recognizes this “return” “Frost at Midnight” and “Fears in Solitude.” Gerard works to move beyond this idea of the return, claiming that the concept “over-simplifies the matter, and it should be made clear that the structural technique of *The Eolian Harp* and a good many other Romantic poems is far more than a ‘pleasing device’: it casts a most useful and pertinent light on the workings of the Romantic mind itself” (84). The persona does not return to the starting point unchanged. Upon coming back to the starting point, he “has been enriched, heightened and uplifted by the various inner and outer experiences” and has come to “a deeper and more accurate knowledge of the universe and his place in it” (Gerard 85).

Gerard breaks the poems into four parts, using “The Æolian Harp” as support. The first part of the poem is “a sensory apprehension of nature,” the second is a “fanciful excursion into Fairy-Land,” and the third part “indulges in speculations of a more intellectual order” (Gerard 83). The fourth and final part is intended as “the culmination
of a pilgrimage that has led him from sensory experience, through fanciful *reverie* and intellectual speculation to deeper awareness of God's greatness and the value of Faith” (Gerard 84). This structure can be transformed into a more generalized pattern applicable to the poems as a group as well as to *Persuasion*. This pattern is: observation of the physical present (part I), flight of the imagination (part II), intellectual speculation (part III), and a return to the physical present firm in the conclusions drawn from experiences of the second and third part (part IV).

This pattern is present in “The Nightingale,” first published in the 1798 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. The poem begins with such concrete images as an “old mossy bridge” (Coleridge, “Nightingale” 4) and “a balmy night” (Coleridge, “Nightingale” 8) filled with dim stars. The use of the words “we” (Coleridge, “Nightingale” 4, 10) and “us” (Coleridge, “Nightingale” 9) establish the fact that the persona is not alone. The song of the nightingale signals the transition from the first part to the second. The poet imagines how the nightingale’s song came to be heard as melancholy:

> But some night-wandering man whose heart was pierced
> With the remembrance of a grievous wrong
> Or slow distemper or neglected love
> (And so, poor wretch, filled all things with himself
> And made all gentle sounds tell back the tale
> Of his own sorrows) – he, and such as he
> First named these notes a melancholy strain (Coleridge, “Nightingale” 16-22)

Since this first imaginary observation of the nightingale’s song as melancholy, all poets have continued to write about it in this manner. Following this imagined scenario, the
poet then moves to intellectual speculation about the relationship between nature and the poet.

This third section is shorter and occurs earlier in the poem than in the poems analyzed for this pattern by Harper and Gerard. The persona speculates that a poet should let nature influence his poetry rather than let his feelings influence nature. The nightingale’s song is melancholy because the poets hearing it were melancholy. If a poet would instead stretch “beside a brook in a mossy forest-dell” (Coleridge, “Nightingale” 26), surrender his spirit (Coleridge, “Nightingale” 29), and forget his fame (Coleridge, “Nightingale” 30), then “his song / Should make all nature lovelier, and itself / Be loved, like nature!” (Coleridge, “Nightingale” 32-34). He concludes that “Natures sweet voices [are] always full of love” (Coleridge, “Nightingale” 42). Nature is inherently joyful and lovely and poetry should reflect this. The remainder of the poem is dedicated to putting this resolution into practice. The poet and his friends listen to nightingale’s song and appreciate its joyful sound. The last stanza confirms the resolution that nature should give joy to man. The poet recalls how his child, who is still “capable of no articulate sound” (Coleridge, “Nightingale” 92), ceases crying “when he beholds the moon” (Coleridge, “Nightingale” 102). Although the fourth part of the poem dominates over half of the lines, the pattern established by Gerard can still be applied.

This same structure found in the “Conversation Poems” can be applied to *Persuasion* as a whole. The novel may roughly be broken into four distinct parts corresponding to the four parts of a Conversation Poem. The first part or the physical present, is the events at Kellynch Hall involving letting it to the Crofts and Anne’s removal to Uppercross. The first few chapters of the novel are dedicated to establishing
the present state of affairs that Anne finds herself in. Her father’s debt, Anne’s realization of the Crofts relationship to Captain Wentworth, the brief history of her relationship with him found in chapter four, and her removal to Uppercross all establish the concrete facts of the story. This section serves to provide context for the novel in much the same way that the phrase “Come we will rest on this old mossy bridge!” (Coleridge, “Nightingale” 4) provides context for “The Nightingale.” Until Captain Wentworth arrives at Uppercross, there are no occasions to spark Anne’s imagination.

Just as the nightingale’s song marks the transition from the first to the second part in the poem, Captain Wentworth’s reintroduction into Anne’s life signals the shift to the second part of the novel. The brevity of their interactions necessitates that Anne’s imagination play a key part in their interpretation. From his first visit to Mary and Charles’ house, Anne begins to imagine how to interpret his actions towards her: “how were his sentiments to be read? Was this like wishing to avoid her?” (Austen 94). She imagines Wentworth’s assistance in removing her nephew, Walter, from her back and Wentworth’s subsequent occupation with him to be a sign “that he meant to avoid hearing her thanks and...that her conversation was the last of his wants” (Austen 112). These interpretations are influenced by Anne’s preconceived notions of how Wentworth must feel towards her and are not rooted in fact. This is further confirmed by Wentworth’s confession at the end of the novel that he had “loved none but her” (Austen 249). The events at Lyme serve as a transition between the second and third part. Louisa’s accident makes communication between them more frequent and Anne’s cool-headedness during the crisis earns Wentworth’s admiration.
Anne's interactions with Wentworth at Bath belong to the third part, when she begins to infer the correct meaning behind his words, manner, and actions. Her interpretations cease to be tainted as much by the events of the past and she gains more confidence when speaking to him. This is similar to when, in "The Nightingale," the persona realizes that poets' own experiences have caused a misinterpretation of the nightingale's song as sad. He moves past this tainted understanding to view nature as beautiful and the nightingale's song as "merry" (Coleridge, "Nightingale" 43). Once Anne begins to base her observations on the present rather than tinting them with the past, she starts to come to clearer conclusions. They are no longer flights of fancy but observations of the subtle signs that Wentworth gives in their conversations together. The pair's interaction in the octagon room is one example of this. She also correctly interprets his abrupt departure from the concert as jealousy of Mr. Elliot, rather than imagining it to be some misgiving about her own character.

The fourth part begins with her conversation with Captain Harville and the letter Wentworth writes to Anne. She returns to the physical present, firm in the conviction that Wentworth still loves her and that she still loves him. She is able to act upon this conviction in her conversation about constancy and devotion with Captain Harville. Wentworth's letter to Anne only confirms what she already knew. The remainder of the novel is dedicated to describing the mutual happiness they find together by acting upon their love for one another. It is the final resolution of the intellectual journey that Anne has undergone. She is content with this resolution and remains firm in it.

Breaking the novel into these four parts makes it possible to compare the structure to that of the "Conversation Poems." It is this similar structure combined with the
emphasis on the interaction between the physical world and the imagination that link the “Conversation Poems” and *Persuasion*. Coleridge was the first to fully develop the Greater Romantic Lyric, a form which would influence poets for generations to come. Austen adapted this structure to create a novel whose heroine must go on her own internal journey to become confident in her feelings towards Wentworth and his feelings toward her. Just as the themes and symbolism of “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” provided a base for Mary Shelley when writing *Frankenstein*, the structure and ideas of the “Conversation Poems” are a foundation for Austen when writing *Persuasion*. Coleridge provided the means for a deeper exploration of the power of the imagination.

Austen’s reading habits and access to a wide range of books make it reasonable to assume that she was familiar with Coleridge’s work. The influence of Coleridge’s “Conversation Poems” can be clearly seen in what is considered Austen’s most Romantic novel, *Persuasion*. Whereas imagination in “Rime” and *Frankenstein* works to push the boundaries of human nature, imagination in the “Conversation Poems” and *Persuasion* helps the main character to come to a better understanding of the world around them. Coleridge’s poetry impacted the work of authors outside the Romantic circle and continued to impact writers into the next era of literature: the Victorian era.
Mary mother, save me now!
(Said Christabel) And who art thou? ("Christabel" 69-70)

We must not look at goblin men,
We must not buy their fruits:
Who knows upon what soil they fed
Their hungry thirsty roots? (Rossetti 42-45)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was especially venerated in Victorian society. Some of his most famous poems, such as "Christabel" and "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" deal with the supernatural. Christina Rossetti was a Victorian era poet, whose most famous poem, "Goblin Market" (written in 1859), also deals with supernatural themes. Both poets use imagination to create a fairytale-like world as well as the grave dangers that threaten its inhabitants. The time of day that the major events occur in both poems, the sexual implications interwoven with fairytale qualities, and the presence of a vampire tie Coleridge's "Christabel" to Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market."

There is no sparsity of scholarship on either of these two poems, but there has not been a comprehensive comparative study of them. Roy Basler's essay, "Christabel," works to push away the veil of folklore and superstition that surrounds Geraldine to reveal the emotional, psychological, and sexual themes beneath it. He does this by
applying a specific interpretation of folklore and fairytales. Namely, that these stories are concerned with emotion in general and the mystery of sex in particular; the reason for this is because people used the “realm of witchcraft and fairylore” to deal with this mystery of sex (73). I apply Basler’s interpretation of fairytales in my own analysis of “Goblin Market.”

In the essay “Symbol and Reality in Christina Rossetti’s Goblin Market,” Lona Mosk Packer does much the same thing as Basler. Acknowledging that the central theme of “Goblin Market” is temptation, Packer looks at the symbolism of the fruit and the goblins themselves. She writes “the lusciousness of the forbidden fruit and the charm of the little animal-faced goblins are but different aspects of nature, the core of which is sexual passion” (377). This interpretation of “Goblin Market” is similar to the method of interpretation Basler uses for “Christabel.”

Arthur H. Nethercot works to untangle the mystery of the identity of Geraldine in The Road to Tryermaine, his authoritative book on “Christabel.” A common theory, which he supports, is that Geraldine is a vampire. To prove this theory, Nethercot lists three attributes that can be used to identify a vampire: the waning of the victim, the renewed strength of the vampire, and subsequent preying upon the victim’s family (66). These three characteristics are in keeping with traditional vampire lore and are useful for identifying vampirical activity in both poems.

David F. Morrill addresses the presence of vampires in “Goblin Market” in his essay “‘Twilight is Not Good for Maidens’: Uncle Polidori and the Psychodynamics of Vampirism in ‘Goblin Market.’” His analysis focuses on the influence of Polidori’s The Vampyre on “Goblin Market,” but the observations he makes can be applied to
"Christabel" as well. He suggests that the goblins are a kind of vampire and that by eating their fruit, maidens are condemned to become vampires themselves. He also writes about the first of the three indicators listed by Nethercot, the waning of the victim. I will use some of the evidence put forth by Morrill, especially concerning the maidens’ transformation, but will primarily focus on the three characteristics listed by Nethercot to prove the presence of vampires in both poems.

The Rossetti family was an exceptionally literate and well-read family living in Victorian England and there is little doubt that Christina Rossetti would have been familiar with the works of Coleridge. David Hogsette explains the changing public opinion of Coleridge in his essay “Coleridge as Victorian Heirloom: Nostalgic Rhetoric in the Early Victorian Reviews of ‘Poetical Works.’” At the beginning of the nineteenth century, especially after the publication of the Christabel volume of poetry, Coleridge was viewed “as a weaver of dangerous imaginative poems who threatened to reduce England to a state of horrific barbarity marked by Germanic metaphysics and Oriental mysticism” (Hogsette 63). However, by the late 1820s and early 1830s, he had been transformed into “poetic and intellectual saint around whom a stable cultural history could be established” (Hogsette 63). He was highly venerated in Victorian society and looked on as one of England’s great poets. Add to this the fact that “Rossetti’s grandfather, Gaetano, fervently admired Romantic literature and anything dealing with the supernatural” (Morrill 1) and consequently kept many works of this sort in his library.

2 Although further analysis is beyond the scope of this project, it is worth noting that The Vampyre was the result of the same ghost story writing contest that produced Frankenstein. Byron, Polidori, and the Shelleys all participated in this contest. On the day after its initiation, P.B. Shelley had a severe reaction to Byron’s recitation of “Christabel” and made such a scene that it is fully probable that the poem remained foremost in the minds of the writers as they composed their ghost stories (“Summer of 1816”).
There can be little doubt that Christina Rossetti was well acquainted with the works of Coleridge.

One important similarity between “Christabel” and “Goblin Market” is the time in which the key events of the stories occur. Christabel is out in the woods after dark when she discovers Geraldine. Coleridge makes this clear with the first line of his poem: “‘Tis the middle of night by the castle clock” (Coleridge, “Christabel” 1). Christabel and Geraldine’s journey back to the castle is made entirely under the cover of darkness and Christabel states that “all our household are at rest” (Coleridge, “Christabel” 116). Christabel’s discovery of Geraldine in the woods as well as Geraldine’s spell on Christabel both occur at night. It is under the cover of darkness that the key events of the poem happen. Darkness is an important factor in this poem and is also a characteristic that links it to the events of “Goblin Market.”

The goblins appear in the glen to sell their wares “morning and evening” (Rossetti 1). They are not there for the entire day, but rather only in the morning, right after the night, and the evening, right before the night. The sisters do not hear them crying when they are going about their daily chores and Laura is “longing for the night” (Rossetti 214) so that she can return to the market. Furthermore, the three women mentioned in the poem all have interactions with the goblins in the twilight hours. Lizzie and Laura are walking in the evening when Laura succumbs to the cries of the goblins. Lizzie later admonishes her sister, reminding her that “twilight is not good for maidens” (Rossetti 143). Jeanie likewise “met them [the goblins] in the moonlight” (Rossetti 148). It is also explicitly stated that Lizzie meets the goblin men in the evening hours as well: “At
twilight, halted by the brook” (Rossetti 326). The time of day in which the major events occur in “Christabel” and in “Goblin Market” tie the two together.

Traditionally, nighttime is the most common time for strange and supernatural events to occur in fairytales. Whenever she was questioned about the meaning behind the poem, Christina Rossetti insisted that it was merely a fairytale, meant for children. This statement of author’s intent has not stopped literary critics throughout the centuries from coming up with interpretations ranging from a Christian Redemption allegory to a lesbian love story. One of these interpretations is a sexual interpretation, where the fruit is representative of sexual conduct.

Interestingly, the case is very similar for Coleridge’s unfinished yet renowned poem, “Christabel.” Coleridge was aware that there were questions about the meanings and implications surrounding “Christabel” as evidenced by two of his letters to William Blackwood and Robert Southey respectively. In his letter to Blackwood, Coleridge tacitly admits “the grounds for satire on the sexual theme of Christabel, so long as no questions involving personal turpitude were raised” (Basler 76). In the letter to Southey he “merely shrugged off a vicious anonymous criticism” (Basler 76). It is interesting that, unlike Rossetti, he did not “deny the sexual theme, though he was obviously desirous of avoiding personal calumny brought on by recognition of it” (Basler 76). If Rossetti’s flat out denial did not stop critics from coming up with varying interpretations, then Coleridge’s non-committal stance definitely did not prevent it. Although both poems appear outwardly to be fairytales, they deal with much more as Basler discusses in his essay.
Basler presents an interesting theory on fairytales that can be applied to both "Christabel" and "Goblin Market." He explains that fairytales "are riddled with the mystery of sex as a powerful and inscrutable force which drives men and women into irrational emotional situations and strange actions almost beyond human comprehension" (Basler 73). It is the mysterious Geraldine who introduces "Christabel" to the realm of the supernatural. There are many theories as to her true nature, which is never revealed explicitly in the poem. The only undeniable fact is that Geraldine possesses supernatural powers, which she uses on Christabel. It is this power which transforms the poem into a fairytale and it is with her that many of the sexual implications lie.

Christabel does not, perhaps, behave in quite so deliberate of a manner as Laura does by going to the goblin market, but she nonetheless, opens herself up to the wiles of Geraldine. Christabel is aware that she should not be out of doors in the middle of the night. Coleridge illustrates the pains she took to keep silent when he describes her midnight journey to the woods: "she stole along, she nothing spoke / the sighs she heaved were soft and low" ("Christabel" 31-32). Likewise, the return to the castle is done in careful silence. Christabel tells Geraldine that they must "move as if in stealth" (Coleridge, "Christabel" 120), so as not to awaken her father or the rest of the household. Once in the castle, Christabel implores Geraldine a second time to "softly tread" (Coleridge, "Christabel" 164). Coleridge continues to place great emphasis on the importance of keeping Christabel's midnight journey a secret from the rest of the household: Christabel is "jealous of the listening air" ("Christabel" 167), the pair must "steal their way from stair to stair" ("Christabel" 168), and Christabel is "still as death with stifled breath" ("Christabel" 171) when passing her father's room.
Christabel claims the reason for such silence is her father’s poor health, which prevents him from sleeping well. She mentions this twice to Geraldine on their journey back. The first occurrence is outside the castle when she explains “Sir Leoline is weak in health / And may not well awakened be” (Coleridge, “Christabel” 118-119). The second time is when they are indoors; she reiterates that they must tread silently for her “father seldom sleepeth well” (Coleridge, “Christabel” 165). However, her actions seem to be more out of fear of discovery than out of consideration for her father. She implores that they move silently because she knows he is a light sleeper and might easily awake and discover what she has done. The silence and secrecy associated with Christabel’s nighttime journey are proof that she was well aware that she should not have been out at that time.

The supernatural and the sexual become very clearly intertwined in the scene in Christabel’s chamber. The first proof of this is the physical contact between Christabel and Geraldine. In fact, this is the cumulation of the physical contact between the two. Geraldine seeks physical contact from the first moment that Christabel discovers her under the oak tree. She begins and ends their meeting with the plea “stretch forth thy hand” (Coleridge, “Christabel” 75, 102). Physical contact between the two occurs a second time when Christabel must carry Geraldine over the threshold into the castle. Once they are in the bedchamber, Geraldine is far more forward with this physical contact. She disrobes, climbs into bed with Christabel, and holds her in her enchanting embrace. Although there is nothing explicitly stated in the passage, “it seems too difficult to suppose that Coleridge was unaware of the sexual implications of Geraldine, when one considers that it would have been the very one uppermost in the mind of any reader
cognizant of the traditionally sexual mystery of vampires, lamias, mermaids, fairies, elves, and witch-women in general” (Basler 86). Further evidence can be found in Christabel’s reaction after she comes out of her trance. She sheds “large tears that leave the lashes bright” (Coleridge, “Christabel” 316) and her face “grows sad and soft” (Coleridge, “Christabel” 314). The next morning, Christabel cannot shake the feeling of shame, as shown by her declaration: “‘Sure I have sinned’” (Coleridge, “Christabel” 381). If this was merely some sort of supernatural ritual, her reaction would have been merely fear or dread, not sorrow and shame. Geraldine is clearly not only a supernatural being, but also represents sexual conduct.

Christabel tries to recover from the night’s events the following morning, just as Laura in “Goblin Market” tries to brush off her trip to the market as nothing. She prays that Christ “might wash away her sins unknown” (Coleridge, “Christabel” 390) and then brings Geraldine before her father and introduces her. The knowledge which she alone is cursed to know burns inside of her though, making her unable to move past the events of the night before. Her inability to recover is only made worse by the repeated visions she sees of Geraldine. The most striking of these is the appearance of Geraldine as a snake: “the lady’s eyes they shrunk in her head / Each shrunk up to a serpent’s eye” (Coleridge, “Christabel” 584-585). She begins to act strangely and arouses the wrath of her father when she begs that Geraldine be sent away. Geraldine is a reminder of the events the night before, which Christabel cannot move past. The forbidden nature of Christabel’s journey and the presence of Geraldine fill this poem with sexual implications.

“Christabel” is not the only fairytale poem that is filled with sexual implications without ever being explicitly stated. Initially a sexual interpretation of “Goblin Market”
may seem at odds with the author's insistence that the poem was merely a fairytale for children, but research into theories on fairytales proves this may not be the case. For example, Basler's approach explains why, only moments after reminding Lizzie to avoid the goblin men, Laura runs to their market. This is one of the irrational actions that Basler is referring to in his explanation of the theory. Viewing the poem through this lens adds credibility to the sexual interpretation.

There are many instances throughout the poem that further lend credence to the sexual interpretation. One such instance occurs early in the poem with the line "Maids heard the goblins cry" (Rossetti 2). Special attention should be given to the choice of the word "maid." Men cannot hear the cries of the goblin men and neither can all women. It is specifically unmarried women, presumably virgins, who can be tempted by the wares of the goblin market. This is furthered evidenced by Jeanie, the maiden "who should have been a bride" (Rossetti 313). There is never any reference to married women falling prey to the goblin men and their fruits.

Jeanie died "for joys brides hope to have" (Rossetti 314). This line makes a distinction "between the two sorts of love, that which is domestic and legitimate, and the other, which is outlawed" (Packer 379). This distinction between the legitimate and the forbidden comes again when the goblins tell Lizzie that she cannot take the fruit home because "Half their bloom would fly, / Half their dew would dry, / Half their flavor would pass by" (Rossetti 377-379). The pleasure of the fruit would be lost in waiting to consume it; eating it at home would take away its forbidden nature and legitimize it. If the fruit is representative of sexual conduct, then the goblins are claiming that waiting until marriage, when it is no longer forbidden, will destroy half the pleasure.
The words used to describe Lizzie's resistance to the attack of the goblin men also indicate a potential sexual nature of the fruit. Lizzie is “white and golden” (Rossetti 408), “a lily” (Rossetti 409), “white with blossoms” (Rossetti 416), and “a royal virgin town” (Rossetti 418). All of these images have connotations of purity, a purity that Lizzie retains despite the attack of the goblin men. The goblins fling her silver penny back at her and she leaves them physically beaten yet morally triumphant. Her “value,” represented by the silver penny, has not decreased despite the repeated assault of the goblins and their fruit. Applying Basler’s theory regarding fairytales helps to reconcile the sexual implications of the poems with Rossetti’s insistence that the poem was a fairytale.

The awareness that Christabel had of the forbidden nature of her journey associates her with Laura from “Goblin Market.” Although she did not seek out Geraldine as Laura sought out the fruit, Christabel nonetheless did something that was not allowed. Laura was aware of the forbidden nature of the goblin market, but this did not prevent her from going. Both women break the rules given to them and consequently suffer the consequences: they begin to undergo a physical transformation as a result of their transgression. Christabel is out after dark and sleeps with Geraldine. As a result, she is placed under a spell and the next day begins what appears to be a physical transformation. Twice she makes “a hissing sound” (Coleridge, “Christabel” 459, 591) which startles all around her. Sir Leoline asks “what ails then my beloved child” (Coleridge, “Christabel” 470) after the first instance and grows angry with her after the second instance. Christabel begins growing dizzy and shuddering. After Laura eats the goblin fruit she sits “in sullen silence of exceeding pain” (Rossetti 271) and “her hair grew thin and gray” (Rossetti 277). Lizzie grows fearful that Laura will suffer the same
fate as Jeanie. In both poems, family members of the women recognize the transformation. It is not only a mental transformation but a physiological one as well. As there can be little doubt that Christina Rossetti had read or at least knew of “Christabel”, the similarity between the two characters becomes all the more significant.

Geraldine’s counterpart in “Goblin Market” is the forbidden fruit that causes the downfall of maidens. Geraldine causes Christabel to fall from favor with her father, Sir Leoline. Christabel knows Geraldine’s true nature, but she is unable to tell anyone because of Geraldine’s spell. Likewise, Laura knows what the fruit is like in the goblin market, but she is unable to convey her experience to her sister. Christabel has a physical reaction to her forced silence, just at Laura has a physical reaction to the silence of the goblin market. She can no longer hear the goblins selling their fruit and it brings about her downfall. Sir Leoline still sees Geraldine in all her beauty and charm, just as Lizzie can still hear the goblins’ crying, selling their fruit. Geraldine and the goblin fruit are what bring their respective poems into the realm of the supernatural, making them representative of the sexual.

A final comparison that may be made between these two poems is the subtle references to vampirism in each poem. Vampires are certainly never specifically mentioned in either of these works, but their presence can be felt nonetheless. Nethercot gives a list of characteristics associated with vampirical behavior: “the faintness and emaciation of the victim, the well-being and renewed vitality of the assailant, and the latter’s additional parasitism on other members of the victim’s family” (Nethercot 66). These signs of a vampire’s presence are found in “Christabel” as well as in “Goblin Market.”
A close examination of the character and actions of Geraldine reveals to the reader that she is a vampire. Geraldine is unmistakably supernatural and possesses some otherworldly power, which she uses on Christabel. There are a few instances on the journey to the castle that hint at Geraldine's nature. One of the most striking of these is her inability to pass over the threshold of the castle:

The lady sank, belike through pain,
And Christabel with might and main
Lifted her up, a weary weight,
Over the threshold of the gate
Then the lady rose again,

And moved, as she were not in pain. (Coleridge, “Christabel” 129-134)

Vampires may not enter a dwelling unless they are invited in by those who live there. The uneasiness of the mastiff when the pair pass by in the courtyard also suggests that Geraldine is a vampire. Lastly, “the name of the Virgin distresses her, and the shadows from the angel on the lamp sap her strength so that she almost faints” (Nethercot 56). These three occurrences hint at Geraldine’s nature but there is more evidence that supports this.

The morning after Geraldine and Christabel sleep together, there is a notable physical transformation in both characters. Geraldine awakes “fairer yet! And yet more fair” (Coleridge, “Christabel” 374) and “her girded vests / grew tight beneath her heaving breasts” (Coleridge, “Christabel” 379-380). Her night with Christabel has somehow revitalized her. Only the night before her bosom was old and cold, but now it is full. As discussed earlier, Christabel begins to undergo her own physical transformation. As
Nethercot points out, Christabel actually begins to be transformed into whatever sort of being Geraldine is “in her manner, in her appearance, in the sounds she utters, she imitates all that is most sinister in her previous night’s bedfellow” (69). Christabel’s transformation is particularly supportive of the vampire theory, as it is traditionally accepted that a vampire’s victim will become a vampire themselves. After gaining control over Christabel, Geraldine moves on to gain power over Sir Leoline, fulfilling the last of the three characteristics listed by Nethercot. Sir Leoline is so fully under her influence that he acts out against his daughter in defense of Geraldine. Coleridge applies subtle devices to hint at the true nature of Geraldine without ever explicitly stating that she is a vampire.

Vampirism in “Goblin Market” is slightly more difficult to detect, but through close reading, it is possible to find it. One indication is the goblins’ inability to seek out their victims. Rather the maids must come to them and buy their fruits. This reflects the tradition that vampires must be invited in. In this instance, Laura’s “clipping the golden lock is the unhasping of the window” (Morrill 7). The word “suck” in relation to eating the fruit is another hint at possible vampirical activity. Morrill points out that “through a reversal of the process she [Laura] becomes the active catalyst in her initiation into evil through sucking” (3). Even though the goblins do not literally suck Laura’s blood, they begin to suck away her life.

The goblins are very eager that the maids eat the fruit. They do not care that Laura has “no coin” (Rossetti 116) but instead say “‘buy from us with a golden curl’” (Rossetti 1225). They are not interested in Lizzie’s silver penny, but rather they are interested in making her eat the fruit. Her refusal to eat the fruit sparks a very violent reaction from the
goblins who “squeezed their fruits / against her mouth to make her eat” (Rossetti 406-407). Their main interest is not in profit but in making the maids eat the fruit, they obviously have something to gain. Lizzie’s resistance to them has an adverse effect on the goblins: “Worn out by her resistance” (Rossetti 438), the goblins “writhed into the ground” (Rossetti 442), “dived into the brook” (Rossetti 443), “scudded on the gale without a sound” (Rossetti 445), and “vanished in the distance” (Rossetti 446). This is a far cry from the energetic creatures seen earlier in poem. The goblins rely on the maids eating the fruit to renew their vitality.

Laura’s physical decline after eating the goblin fruit is also indicative of vampirical activity. She is “knocking at Death’s door” (Rossetti 321) and seems to be on the same path as Jeanie. Morrill suggests in his essay that Laura would not actually die, but be doomed to become a sort of vampire. As evidence for this, he points to the lines that discuss Jeanie’s grave, where “to this day no grass will grow” (Rossetti 158) and the daisies planted there “never blow” (Rossetti 160). Morrill claims that these lines prove that “all is not well under the earth...Clearly something or someone is draining this natural energy, sucking the life-giving properties of the flowers and surviving on such a diet. The horrifying implication of this energy exchange can only lead the reader to expect that Jeanie is somehow ‘alive’” (9). Assuming Merrill’s theory is correct, then the vampirical qualities of the goblins become even clearer. The goblins gain their vitality from the maids who eat the fruit, who in turn are doomed to a living death, draining nature of life to keep from starvation.

The last quality listed by Nethercot is the preying upon other members of the victim’s family by the vampire. At first, this may seem to be lacking in “Goblin Market.”
The goblins do not seem to be particular about who their prey is, but an examination of the vocabulary Rossetti uses hints that this may not be the case. When the goblins approach Laura they “bade her taste / In tones as smooth as honey” (Rossetti 107-108). However, when the goblins approach Lizzie they “hugged her and kissed her, / squeezed her and caressed her” (Rossetti 348-349). The goblins come towards Laura at a slow pace and sit down in the glen while they bid her to join them. Contrast this with their reaction when they spy Lizzie:

[they] came towards her hobbling,

flying, running, leaping,

Puffing and blowing,

Chuckling, clapping, crowing,

Clucking and gobbling,

Mopping and mowing (Rossetti 332-336)

They are clearly much more excited at Lizzie’s appearance than they were at Laura’s. Lizzie is Laura’s sister and this makes her more significant. The presence of vampires is a final link that ties “Christabel” to “Goblin Market.”

Darkness and twilight, the sexual implications implicit in fairytales, and vampirical behavior indicate a close link between Coleridge’s “Christabel” and Christina Rossetti’s “Goblin Market.” There are multiple similarities between the two poems, both on the surface and layered in the subtle hints and suggestions. A darker side of imagination is revealed in these two poems. In contrast to the security achieved through imagination in the “Conversation Poems” and *Persuasion*, the characters in the fairytale worlds of “Christabel” and “Goblin Market” face grave danger. They exist within the
imagination and are threatened by the supernatural creatures that reside within the worlds of the poems. It is the similarities between the fantasy world of “Christabel” and that of “Goblin Market” that indicate that Coleridge’s work had an influence on “Goblin Market.”
Conclusion

British Romantic poetry is characterized by the outpouring of new ideas regarding anything from the rights of man to the purpose of poetry. Many of the modern ideas regarding literature can trace their origin to this period. Each of the six major Romantic poets contributed something to the development of British Romanticism. Although the influence of Samuel Taylor Coleridge has been recognized, comparative studies tend to focus on the work of other Romantics. This has left a substantial gap in the research done on British Romanticism.

I have filled part of this gap by comparing some of Coleridge’s most notable work with the work of later writers. Admittedly, there is no way to absolutely claim that Coleridge’s work influenced these writers. However, given the wide range of similarities between the works and the well-read nature of the later writers, it remains a reasonable claim. Furthermore, this limitation has not prevented other academics from exploring the influence of one writer over another. I have shown the wide range of Coleridge’s influence by examining two of his three mystery poems, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and “Christabel,” as well as the “Conversation Poems,” a set of his more reflective pieces. I also demonstrated this range by examining both novels and poetry. I found these similarities by looking at common themes, imagery, and structure.

In the first chapter, I looked at the similarities between Coleridge’s poem, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. Mary Shelley was in the circle of second generation Romantic writers and was undoubtedly familiar with Coleridge’s work. His influence over her writing has been acknowledged, but
scholarship focuses on the relationship between her writing and that of her husband or her parents. To demonstrate the influence that “Rime” had on Mary Shelley, I look at the use of ice imagery, not-human characters, and the power associated with lack of identity.

The use of ice imagery indicates that the characters trapped by the ice are outcasts from society. This connects the Mariner to both Walton and Frankenstein. Secondly, the not-human is present in both the poem and the novel. Life-In-Death and the reanimated bodies of the dead sailors fall into this category in the “Rime.” The Creature that Frankenstein creates is also an example of a not-human. Lastly, the power of both the Mariner and the Creature originates in their lack of identity. The Mariner exercises a strange power over the Wedding Guest, forcing him to listen the Mariner’s tale against his will. Although the Mariner is the main character of the poem, the reader knows nothing more of the Mariner’s identity by the end than they did at the beginning. The Creature is the first of its kind, not even its creator knows its limits. This lack of identity makes it all powerful. The similar imagery and themes of “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and *Frankenstein* indicate that the poem influenced Mary Shelley’s writing of the novel.

The second chapter focused on the similarities between Coleridge’s “Conversation Poems” and the most Romantic of Austen’s novels, *Persuasion*. Critics use the label “Conversation Poems” to refer to a group of eight poems with similar attributes and structure. This style of poetry had been used by other poets before Coleridge, but he is justifiably considered to be one who developed and perfected it. Except for “To William Wordsworth,” which was published in 1817, some form of all the “Conversation Poems” had been published by 1802. Jane Austen was an avid reader and
critics concur that it is illogical to think she was unfamiliar with Coleridge's work. The focus on the intersection between the physical world and the imaginary as well as the structural layout of *Persuasion* indicate that the “Conversation Poems” influenced Austen while writing the novel.

One attribute that ties the “Conversation Poems” together is the persona’s journey from his present surroundings into the realm of imagination. The first lines are dedicated to a description of the present scene which inspires some further internal meditation. Likewise, the narration of *Persuasion* is primarily filtered through Anne’s point of view. While her imaginings may not be so fanciful as those found in the poems, they are still journeys into her mind. A similar four-part structure is a second characteristic that the “Conversation Poems” and *Persuasion* share. This structure is: observation of the physical present (part I), flight of the imagination (part II), intellectual speculation (part III), and a return to the physical present firm in the conclusions drawn from experiences of the second and third part (part IV). The introspective narrator and the similar four-part tie the “Conversation Poems” to *Persuasion*.

The third chapter focuses on another of Coleridge’s mystery poems, “Christabel,” and a Victorian era poem, Christina Rossetti’s “Goblin Market.” By the Victorian era, Coleridge had become venerated as one of Britain’s great poets. Rossetti’s came from a very literate family and her grandfather’s library contained many Romantic works. It is only logical that she would have been familiar with Coleridge’s poetry. The time that the major events occur, the sexual inferences implicit in the fairytale style, and the presence of a vampire link “Christabel” and “Goblin Market.”
It is on a nighttime journey that Christabel encounters Geraldine and their subsequent interactions occur. Likewise, each of the three maidens of “Goblin Market” journey to the market and interact with the Goblins in the twilight hours. Both poems contain fairytale elements that veil but not conceal sexual implications. Basler suggests in his essay that the strange actions of the main characters of fairytales are driven by the powerful mystery of sex. Christabel and Laura both act strangely by going on a forbidden journey. Their experiences on their respective journeys are filled with sexual undertones and implications. Christabel and Laura both undergo a negative physical and mental transformation as a result of their forbidden journeys. Finally, there are indications of the presence of a vampire in both poems. The waning of the victim, the renewed strength of the assailant, and the subsequent attempted attacks on the victim’s family are three of the major indicators of a vampire’s presence. The time of day that the major events occur, the sexual implications interwoven with fairytale elements, and the presence of a vampire link these two poems together.

The poetry of the British Romantic period impacted writers for generations to come. There are still traces of this influence present in literature today. This is why it is important to understand the origins of these ideas. The scholarship on the influence of Coleridge’s poetry is sparse. This paper has sought to fill some of this gap in the research. Future comparative studies could examine the influence Coleridge’s work on other authors and poets of different schools or eras of literature. This research would be vital to understanding a turning point in English literature.
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