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David D. Joplin. *Coleridge's Idea of Wordsworth as Philosopher Poet*.  
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Much scholarship on the poetry of William Wordsworth has focused on the interaction between nature and the poet and illustrating the growth of the poet's mind. While a few studies, namely John Hodgson's *Wordsworth's Philosophical Poetry 1797-1814* and Alan Grob's *The Philosophic Mind*, place Wordsworth's work in a philosophical tradition, the critical trend has been to look at the development of the poet through a psychological lens. In addition, scholars have written an extensive body of criticism discussing the influence of Samuel Taylor Coleridge on Wordsworth. Working in opposition to this trend, David D. Joplin in his work *Coleridge's Idea of Wordsworth as a Philosopher Poet* takes an onto-epistemological approach that "records a metaphysical growth ... apart from personal biography" (7) and develops a system of ideas from Coleridge's thought and applies it to Wordsworth's poetry. Drawing on Owen Barfield's epistemology, Joplin illustrates how "Coleridge's dynamic philosophy provides the necessary 'system' with which to untangle the often confusing expression of Wordsworth's 'philosophy'" (16).

At first glance, Joplin's approach may appear to be outdated; yet what he has succeeded in doing is offering a complex, thorough reading of Wordsworth's poetry that enhances not only the reader's understanding of Wordsworth's achievement as a "philosopher poet" but also brings clarity and an organic consistency to Coleridge's thought. He connects his views of Coleridge's philosophy to more current work on archetypal psychology and mythology by Mircea Eliade and Erich Neumann. In this way, he places his Barfieldian critical approach in a rich context.

Structuring the work into four chapters, Joplin uses Coleridge's philosophical ideas from *The Friend* and *The Biographia Literaria* to elucidate Wordsworth's movement from "original participation" to isolation and eventually to attempts at "final participation." These terms, of course, he has borrowed from the vocabulary of Owen Barfield. Barfield's terminology helps Joplin overcome the difficulty of Coleridge's limited linguistic choices. As Joplin explains, Coleridge had "inherited a vocabulary informed by the empirical and mechanistic tradition" (33-34), which he was attempting to completely reject. Thus, Barfield's terms can help clarify the ideas of Coleridge by utilizing vocabulary that has lost much of the positivism inherent in the language of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Although the last chapter provides the reader with a close analysis of

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Wordsworth's poetry, the first three chapters develop the necessary ideas in Coleridge's work, illustrate the connections between the ideas in Coleridge's prose and Wordsworth's poetry, and provide the reader with Barfield's terminology.

Joplin begins by explaining Coleridge's struggles to unify and reject Cartesian dualism and connects this attempt with the philosophic poet's task of "reanimating a world grown cold and dead" (41) under empiricism. By tracing the major ideas of rational empiricism that Coleridge opposed, Joplin provides a context from which to ascertain Coleridge's view of the philosopher and the philosophic poet. Then Joplin turns to the way in which Wordsworth presented poetically what Coleridge stated philosophically, how Wordsworth added "feeling" to the same effort to unite heart and head, mind, and spirit. His illustrations exemplify how Wordsworth's poetry was able to avoid the logical and linguistic difficulties impossible for Coleridge to negotiate.

Perhaps the most difficult task that Joplin asks of the reader is to set aside our assumptions based on the "positivist approach central to experimental science" (61). Without discarding these assumptions, the reader cannot engage the ideas of "creative perception" that involve re-conceptualizing ideas about mind, spirit, and nature central to Coleridge's and Wordsworth's philosophy. Therefore, much of Joplin's book sets out to help the reader reach beyond empiricism and see the senses as more than "an organic camera," and perception as an "act of mind involving fundamental elements of manifest existence" (71).

Although the first three chapters lay important groundwork for the analysis to come, the last chapter is the most interesting, tracing the growth of the mind in Wordsworth's poetry. Joplin focuses his attention not on the usual poems analyzed by critics to illustrate the growth of mind, such as "Tintern Abbey," *The Prelude*, and "The Immortality Ode," but instead on the Lucy poem "Three Years She Grew." This accomplishes two things: a wholly new reading of the Lucy poem and a convincing demonstration of the onto-epistemological approach to criticism. After reading the last chapter, one can draw large inferences to the more familiar poems.

Overall, Joplin succeeds in providing a meticulous study of the relationship between mind and nature implicit in Wordsworth's poetry. Although the reader comes away wanting more attention given to Wordsworth's larger poems, Joplin opens up a new approach to Wordsworth's philosophy of nature. For Owen Barfield fans, this work also illustrates the continuing importance of his epistemology. Perhaps this work will begin discussion about the validity of an onto-epistemological approach for literature today and demonstrate the work yet to be done using this critical tool. ✨