

NOTE TO USERS

**Page(s) not included in the original manuscript are
unavailable from the author or university. The
manuscript was microfilmed as received**

226

This reproduction is the best copy available.

UMI[®]

THE POETIC IMAGERY
of
EDWIN JOHN PRATT

by Sister Saint Dorothy Marie, C.N.D.

[ie Dorothy Doyle]

Thesis submitted to the Faculty
of Arts of the University of
Ottawa in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy.



Degree conferred May 22, 1958

E. J. Pratt

Secret. of the Graduate Division

Ottawa, Canada, 1958

UMI Number: DC53888

INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI Microform DC53888
Copyright 2011 by ProQuest LLC
All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest LLC
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This thesis was prepared under the guidance of Professor Emmett O'Grady, Ph.D., Head of the Department of English Literature. Gratitude is here expressed for his interest and help.

CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

NAME: Sister St. Dorothy Marie, C.N.D., (Dorothy Doyle)

BORN: December 31, 1911, Georgetown,
Prince Edward Island.

B.A. University of Ottawa, September, 1952.

M.A. University of Ottawa, May, 1956.
Thesis: The Epic Note in the Poetry of
E.J. Pratt.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION:	
PRELIMINARY STATEMENTS	vi
The Purpose of the Thesis	x
Work Previously Done on Pratt	xiv
Contribution this thesis will make	xviii
CHAPTER I.	
DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH	
Definitive Elements	1
Universality of Images	16
Images of Nature	19
Images of Grace	21
Attitude toward Life	26
The Poetic Pattern	31
CHAPTER II.	
THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT	
The Sea	41
Visual Imagery	41
Movement	41
The Predominating Movement	51
Colour	54
Light and Darkness	62
Aural Imagery	
Sound	67
Silence	77
Images and Themes	83
The Personal Image	106
Imagery of Landscape	117
Plants and Flowers	118
Trees	131
Seeds	134
Harvest and Autumn Imagery	134
Weather	136
Mist and Vapor and Fog	139
Wind	142
Hills, Mountains, Volcanoes	146
Sunlight, Starlight, Dawn and Dusk	151
Moon Images	154

CHAPTER III.	THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT	161
	Life	163
	Death	171
	Time	188
	Hate and Fear	198
	Imagery of Grace	216
	Goodness	217
	Love	220
	Honour and Loyalty	225
CHAPTER IV.	THE INTELLECTIVE ELEMENT	239
	Mythology	241
	Astronomy and Astrology	256
	Historical Essence	259
	The Dignity of Man	
	Intellect, Reason and Will	264
	The Poet and the Sea	276
CONCLUSION		286
BIBLIOGRAPHY		290
APPENDIX		303
ABSTRACT		

INTRODUCTION

We shall not cease from exploration
 And the end of all our exploring
 Will be to arrive where we started
 And to know the place for the first time.¹

Ever since the days of Aristotle men have thought^{of} and discussed the nature of metaphor. Although Dryden said: "Imaging is, in itself, the very height and life of poetry"² throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, critics were apt to talk of and think of imagery as mere ornament. In more recent years the subject has been given a new prominence. At the present time literary critics believe that it is not possible to interpret stylistic peculiarities before being perfectly clear about the thought which informs the artist's work. The image is basic in all poetry, and every image, every metaphor in a poem gains full life and significance only from its context.

The words of T.S. Eliot quoted above, the dictum of the literary critics, and a natural desire to investigate casual claims that have been made concerning the poetry of Edwin John Pratt-- all these have seemed like a ringing challenge which motivated this study.

The course of the exploration may be circular, the final conclusion may be but a new arrival at the starting

¹ T.S. Eliot, "Little Gidding" in Four Quartets, London: Faber and Faber, 1952, p.43.

² John Dryden, quoted in The Poetic Image, by C. Day Lewis, London: Jonathan Cape, 1955, pp.17-18.

INTRODUCTION

vii

point, yet, even then the work will not be futile. In the words of Eliot we may then "know the place for the first time".

Edwin John Pratt has not been sufficiently appreciated as a poet and as a craftsman of lyrical, narrative, and epic poetry. His work has been studied in units; his epic and heroic strength have been acknowledged; yet, a deeper penetration into his poetry, by way of the imagery, may now be timely. By a study of the imagery, we may be able to illumine purple patches in the poems, that previous investigations failed to locate and this may be what is needed to impart new impetus, and vigor, and vitality to his literary life.

In his images the poet leaves a record of his preferences and aversions, his beliefs and opinions, and a glimpse into his personality. It is for this reason that Professor C.F. Spurgeon evaluates the Shakespearean images as: "documentations of the author's personal equipment, his bodily and mental qualities".³ For this reason also, every metaphor becomes an integral part of the symbolism underlying all literature whose motifs of imagery have yielded meanings hitherto unexplored but are now considered supremely important for adequate interpretation.

³ Caroline F. Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery and What it Tells Us, Cambridge, The University Press, 1952, p.6.

INTRODUCTION

viii

It may be that this record left by the poet in the imagery that he employs is an unconscious or even a reluctant one. The poem bespeaks the poet, and the age in which he lives even in spite of his best efforts to write in an absolutely objective manner. The poet's philosophy, his credo, his "message to mankind", may all be subtly concealed and yet startlingly revealed in his imagery. The poet seldom seeks images, they suggest themselves, but once suggested they may not be discarded for they prove their own aptness, they betray the one who begets them.

The metaphorical and imagistic mode of writing has a very long and circuitous ancestral line. That it has seldom fallen into more than a passing disfavour and never into complete oblivion testifies to its merit. It is of the very nature of man to strive to comprehend the abstract by an application of the concrete. Our Lord is acknowledged by all to be the supreme master of the art of inculcating doctrine by happy illustrations drawn from everyday life. The very term "parable" means "a placing of one thing beside another" with a view to complete understanding. There are some thirty parables, and the most explicit of these open with the formula: "The kingdom of heaven is like..."; then follows image, homely, simile or metaphor suited to the hearers' mentality. The hundred sheep, the mustard seed, the foundation stone, the sower, the importunate friend,

INTRODUCTION

ix

all these and a score of other images portray a remarkable realism, a vividness, and a faithfulness to nature that is not farfetched or artificial. In all truth an affinity does exist between the world of nature and the spiritual essence.

Throughout the years the "metaphorical mode" has succeeded in giving to readers, analogies that have enriched literature and at the same time have kept close to its life principle.

The contemporary poet may perhaps seem to pay undue attention to the image; may even seem to be striving for obscurity and paradoxical context by way of imagery; in reality there is no "striving" in his effort, there is art; and the effort the reader makes to comprehend will be rewarded by a proportionate insight; we shall, in fact, find more than we seek.

There is nothing esoteric about the imagery employed by Pratt. No one knows better than he how to call a spade a spade, and yet his poetry contains images of strength and beauty that fashion forth a whole world of hidden analogies which can enrich Canadian poetic themes and give them their rightful place in the annals of world literature.

That this study of imagery in the poetry of Pratt is subsequent in order of time to a previous study which the present writer has done of: The Epic Note in the Poetry of

INTRODUCTION

x

Edwin John Pratt⁴ does not limit the former, nor mitigate the distinction of the latter; because there is no line of demarcation--there is no greater or lesser, both aspects of the poet's creative power are of literary importance.

Although this is a novel venture in the study of Canadian poetry, the writer believes that it may be a profitable one. If this poet, Edwin John Pratt, is to be known by his contemporaries, and by succeeding generations then the study of his poetic imagery would seem to be one of the master keys that might open the lock to new vistas of meaning to new levels of interpretation.

In this study the writer's purpose will be to seek out and to present to the reader the images, the symbolic patterns, and the thematic trends contained in the poetry of Edwin John Pratt and to conclude with a new poetic evaluation which will effect a harmony between poet and poem by way of the imagery. No exact count of the images will be made, nor will the thesis include a detailed study of each and every poem composed by the author, since such a method and such an area of investigation is not necessary here.

Of the sea poems, "The Titanic", the "Roosevelt and the Antinoe", and also "Behind the Log", will receive special attention; "Dunkirk" and "Brebeuf and His Brethren" will be

⁴ M.A. Dissertation, University of Ottawa, 1956.

INTRODUCTION

xi

considered as war poems--the former depicting as it does a war of resistance against Nazi hatred, the latter, a Christian struggle against pagan torture. Together with these major studies will also be included a sufficient number of the shorter poems to be deemed representative of the author's style, and to prove beyond doubt that isolated images, as well as the interlacing and recurrent images which build up into symbols, are documentations of Pratt's tastes and interests and also are witnesses to his personal equipment, his bodily and mental qualities, his sympathies and his dislikes. In other words, to prove that the imagery employed by Pratt is a transcript of his personal world and a mirror of his outlook upon life is the purpose of this thesis.

Literary critics have declared that this Canadian poet is not didactic. The purport of this essay is not to prove that he has a message for our time, for a message could be given much more effectively in prose, but it is to show that the poet, being an artist, makes, and resulting imagery is controlled by the philosophy of the maker. The poet sets out merely to tell a tale but he does it in the light of his own convictions and beliefs. The imagery reflects the man.

Terror and exaltation, conquest and victory, sacrifice and glory--all these seem to make up the loom upon which each of Pratt's poetic constructions is woven. Mr. John Sutherland, while he did not make any definite study of the imagery

INTRODUCTION

xii

has voiced this same opinion:

The passages of greatest exuberance may be distinguished by an undertone of terror. They merely reflect an emotional duality, an interfusion of exaltation and terror that is characteristic of Pratt's work as a whole. There are always these two strands--intertwining strands--in the emotional pattern of his poetry, and if we exclude the one at the expense of the other we probably do so because of a subjective reaction. Once we grasp this fact, we are ready to begin the task of a fuller appreciation and understanding.⁵

The exaltation with which a poem concludes is arrived at only through the terror underlying its action or plot. Pain and suffering lead to glory; the Cross leads to the Crown.

Unless the grain of wheat falling to the ground die, itself remaineth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.⁶

This inspired truth is basic in the philosophy of our Canadian poet. It is this "struggle with a purpose" that he portrays in his imagery.

When we speak of poetic imagination, then, we speak on the one hand of a sympathy common to all men, and on the other hand, of a perpetual reaching-out of this sympathy towards objects otherwise unattainable--towards the past, the future, the absent, "all that lies outside the compass of present experience, without which the meaning of this experience must be so much the less distinct and complete".⁷ From

⁵ John Sutherland, The Poetry of E.J. Pratt, Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1956, p.15.

⁶ St. John, Chapter xii, verses 24-25.

⁷ C. Day Lewis, The Poetic Image, London: Jonathan Cape, 1954, p.66.

INTRODUCTION

xiii

this capacity flows the human sympathy of which Shelley speaks in felicitous phrase: "The observation of the before-apprehended relationships of things."⁸ It is this poetic imagination "intensified, cultivated, and specialized that mirrors the richest experiences of life and that may, perhaps, be the motive force that will urge Canada to rear, at some future time, a monument to the fame of a contemporary poet.

The thesis will present the research that the present writer has done on the images and image themes employed by E.J. Pratt and note their symbolic aspects. If we do not know the poet we cannot prove that he is great, and one way that we may know him better is through the images that he uses, for Vernon Lee has told us that:

The real revelation of the writer (as of the artist) comes in a far more subtle way than by...autobiography; and it comes despite all efforts to elude it;... For what the writer communicates is his temperament, his organic personality, with its preferences and aversions, its pace and rhythm and impact and balance, its swiftness or languor; and this he does whether he be rehearsing his own concerns or inventing someone else's.⁹

Since language, poetry, and imagery seem like circles within circles--language the outermost, and all-encompassing circle and imagery the innermost core--there must be a definite relationship existing in the concentric pattern; and imagery must, therefore, be the central core of both language

⁸ A.C. Cook (Editor) Shelley's, A Defense of Poetry, Boston, Ginn, 1891, p.3.

⁹ Vernon Lee, The Handling of Words, p.109, quoted by Caroline Spurgeon, op.cit., p.1.

INTRODUCTION

xiv

and poetry. In the image, the sensuous, the emotional and the intellectual merge, and the vision of life is whole.

Florence Marsh tells us that "it seems reasonable to suppose that a poet's genius will appear most clearly in the figurative images that he creates to convey his meaning, that the study of a poet's imagery will reveal the poet's basic intuitions concerning reality".¹⁰ In a search of Edwin John Pratt's imaginative vision of life let us turn to his poetry.

If the reader upon having concluded the reading of the thesis can subscribe to the claim that the "essence of Pratt's genius is a deeply original thing, the expression in aesthetic terms of a quality of spirit"¹¹ (as E.K. Brown has stated, but has not qualified by further relative conclusions), and can know whereof such a subscription is made, then the thesis will have realized its aim, and the imagery and symbolic patterns that have been its study will have introduced and revealed the poet in a way that has not hitherto been the subject or the object of any thesis or literary treatise.

There has been but a meager output of critical analyses bearing upon the poems of this eminent author. From time to time reviews, periodicals, and articles have appeared in the University sponsored columns of our quarterlies and

¹⁰ Florence Marsh, Wordsworth's Imagery, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952, p.19.

¹¹ E.K. Brown, "E.J. Pratt", in On Canadian Poetry, Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1944, p.163.

INTRODUCTION

xv

literary journals; however, there has been little or no international comment upon this Canadian poet.

Foremost among the Canadian writings which pay tribute to the greatness of Pratt we find the analyses of Earle Birney, E.K. Brown, Northrop Frye, Pelham Edgar, W.E. Collins, Desmond Pacet, Martin Burns, and George Herbert Clark. Many or most of these reviewers merely make passing mention of the rich imagery of the poems. They sometimes also acknowledge that the imagery combines with and brings out the author's naive originality and his refreshing optimism, and that this contrasts favourably with the frustration motif of a more recent and popular school of poetry. However, no one of them has pursued a systematic study of the poetic imagery. Reviewers and critics all acknowledge the superiority of the poetry of Pratt, but do so in a casual way; if they underline any outstanding trait it is the heroic quality and the epic note. Neither the vivid imagery nor the symbolic strength seems to have attracted any special attention, and no critic has made of it a definite study.

As yet only two small volumes have been published which deal exclusively with the Pratt poetry. Henry W. Wells and Carl F. Klinck have made the writings of Pratt a serious study and, working in collaboration, they have given to the world an informal appreciation of the writer and a friendly interpretation of his poems, in a slender volume entitled:

INTRODUCTION

xvi

Edwin John Pratt, The Man and His Poetry, (1947), in this book a slight comparative analysis is made of the technique in order to ascertain the poet's literary status and to introduce him to an unfamiliar audience. Following a Preface by J. Bartlet Brebner, there follows a three-chapter biographical sketch of Pratt and then a ten-chapter interpretation of several of his well-known poems. Without making any specific study of sources these authors deal casually with the heroic trend found in the narrative verse and show that the poetry seems to contain an unmistakable epic note. They lay supreme emphasis upon the masculine narrative value and stress exclusively the conflict and the heroism but they almost ignore the imagery upon which even the epic value must be built. Here and there throughout the book the symbolism of the poems is spoken of but it is not regarded as a significant factor in making the poet or the poetry great. In fact Professor Klinck thus states his opinion with regard to imagery:

Incidents may provide the "objective correlatives" which Mr. T.S. Eliot demands for the expression of emotion in the form of art. Pratt's character poetry is intellectual, and his symbols are neither objects nor characters, but actions. It is not character but incident that woos us out of our reserve.

The late John Sutherland contributed to Northern Review February/March and April/May 1952, a scholarly article entitled "E.J. Pratt, A Major Contemporary Poet" and in

12 Carl F. Klinck, Edwin J. Pratt, The Man and His Poetry, Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1947, p.56.

INTRODUCTION

xvii

logical sequence exposed data and arguments to prove that Pratt is one of the modern major poets, and that he ranks with Frost and Eliot and the small group of major poets of the century. This illuminating article has provided many parallels which have been incorporated into and developed in the following thesis.

This same author has in September 1956 published a book, entitled, The Poetry of E.J. Pratt, A New Interpretation, in which he has striven to point out the basically Christian trends that may be found in some of the longer poems.

These three works will be used in the present thesis to substantiate new findings, but not to elaborate them.

The writer of this thesis has submitted to Ottawa University a thesis for the Master's Degree, The Epic Note In The Poetry of Edwin John Pratt.

While each of these writings is critically appreciative of the poet's narrative strength, his satirical vein, and his naive originality, only one or two critics have even paused to note the imagery and symbolism with which the poems abound.

Whenever it is possible this thesis will make use of the available books, periodicals and reviews to buttress or refute as the case may be.

As yet there has been no serious Canadian or American attempt to study or evaluate in any systematic or significant

INTRODUCTION

xviii

manner the imagery of the poetry herein considered. This thesis will, therefore, be a new different venture which the writer believes to be timely and necessary.

A study of the imagery in the poetry of Edwin John Pratt will enable the reader to make a closer approach to the poet himself, to his mind, his tastes, his experiences, and to his deeper thoughts. It will throw light from a fresh angle upon his imaginative and pictorial vision, upon his own ideas about his own poems, thus it would seem that such a study may serve as a beacon that may possibly illumine the skies of Canadian Literature.

One cannot accept without question the statement that has so often been made, "E.J. Pratt is a major contemporary poet". It is necessary to delve to the core of the poems and substantiate the claim by ample proof in order to make hearsay positive fact. This investigation has already been attempted in a study of the epic foundation of the longer poems. Several critics note that epic traits are lodged in almost every one of Pratt's poems. Professor Wells thus voices the opinion held also by many others:

Properly to retell the story of Pratt's poem "Brebeuf" is to demonstrate how unimportant is the mere story for the spirit of the work. A living and an ardent creation, this devout epic has both a body and a soul, an inner and an outer reality, to each of which in almost equal measure its strength is due.¹³

¹³ Henry W. Wells, Edwin J. Pratt, The Man and His Poetry, Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1947, p.94.

INTRODUCTION

xix

Epic strength, however, must be supported by its images, even the epic is really epic because its images and symbols proclaim it to be such. The image pattern is so important that C. Day Lewis has pointed out:

If the poem is to be a whole and not a series of stabbing, meaningless flashes, a pattern of imagery must be created, a relationship equivalent to that which underlies all reality living or inanimate.¹⁴

Therefore, this present study would seem to be of primary importance. Professor Spurgeon justifies her detailed study of imagery thus:

A poet is a poet largely by virtue of the power he has, greater than other men, of perceiving hidden likenesses, and by his words, as Shelley says, "unveiling the permanent analogy of things by images" and these images participate in the life of truth.¹⁵

The germinating seed and the falling leaf are capable of illustrating to mankind the great mystery of life and death. This analogy makes man see and comprehend what would otherwise be a mystery. In this way the poet becomes a seer and a prophet. And once again we may go the Spurgeon-study for confirmation of our belief that the analogy is necessary in poetic language: "For, as the poet well knows, it is only by means of hidden analogies that the greatest truths, otherwise inexpressible, can be given a form and a shape capable of being grasped by the human mind."¹⁶

¹⁴ C. Day Lewis, *The Poetic Image*, op.cit., p.86.

¹⁵ Caroline F. Spurgeon, op.cit., p.7.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.7.

INTRODUCTION

XX

John Middleton Murray in a short essay on "Metaphor" in his study Countries of the Mind points out that "sensuous perception and spiritual intuition are both necessary to a great poet".¹⁷ The poet's accumulation of sense-perceptions supplies the most potent means by which he articulates his spiritual intuitions. The subject which the poet is contemplating will stir in his imagination a picture, "half visible, half spiritual" which will emerge in the imagery we find in his poetry. If the work of any poet is great it is because its imagery is great, for the poetic image is the heart and soul of the poem--it is the poem. It is the poetic intuition expressed, the artistic ideal made known to the reader, the analogy by which the invisible becomes visible, the liaison between the spiritual and the real.

The poetry of Edwin John Pratt can be more adequately appraised and appreciated if its basic ingredient be known, if its imagery be evaluated, and if the symbols into which the separate images combine be recognized. And as we have said already, this is not any new theory or study, for according to Aristotle:

Poetry is an artistic form whose essence lies rather in imitation of the idea than in versification.¹⁸

Again the same author declares:

¹⁷ John Middleton Murray, "Metaphor" in Countries of the Mind, London: Oxford University Press, 1931, p.28.

¹⁸ S.H. Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and the Fine Arts, London: Macmillan, 1902, p.155.

INTRODUCTION

xxi

Poetry, unlike the other arts, produces its effects by symbols only. It cannot directly present form and colour to the eye; it can only imply words to call up images of the objects to be represented, These words are written symbols.¹⁹

Poetry appeals to the reader on several levels: the intellectual level, the sensuous level, and the imaginative level. This thesis in concentrating upon a study of imagery will endeavor to show the imaginative power of the Pratt poetry, whose images are sufficiently intensive and extensive to carry along with them not only imaginative stirrings but intellectual and sensuous impact as well.

¹⁹ S.H. Butcher, op.cit., p.137.

CHAPTER ONE

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

Definitive Elements

In this study, the writer's purpose will be to examine, classify and evaluate the images that have been found in the poetry of Edwin John Pratt.

In such a study, the technical aspects of the imagery may not be of major importance because the form of the image does not affect the validity of its meaning as the content does; these aspects must, however, be treated in some detail that the reader may know that standards have been followed.

Current critical theory which defines imagery solely in terms of metaphor and simile does not seem to apply to this poetry. Therefore, confronted with the paradox of a major poet whose imagery yields relatively few apparent metaphors, the student is faced with the choice of one of two alternatives: either the poet has been overestimated or the terms of the student's own definitions are faulty. This second alternative seems to be worth investigating.

While a discussion of imagery with supreme stress on metaphor is not the only and absolute criterion, this method used with discretion and in conjunction with other theories postulating the undifferentiated nature of poetic language and the intuitive quality of poetic thought and leading into a theory of symbolism, does prove useful.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

2

This chapter will contain a consideration of the fundamental interrelationships of language, poetry and imagery as well as brief definitions of image, simile, metaphor and symbol which will provide a basis for the study as a whole.

The very slightest of investigations of imagery will reveal the profound and essential connection between metaphor, speech and thought, and cause one to agree with Father Stephen Brown that "metaphor in one form or another is the warp and woof of speech," and also that "imagery is its very life."¹ This elucidation is further confirmed by I.A. Richards who does not hesitate to say: "Thought is metaphorical and proceeds by comparison, and the metaphors of language derive therefrom."² With the passage of time, language has become less and less poetic, and metaphor is, as Gertrude Buck says: "the necessary stage through which speech must pass on its way to literalism."³

As language grew and developed, words tended to lose their original unique meaning and to find for themselves several more or less related meanings. While the meanings of individual words remained concrete wholes, language was

¹ Stephen J. Brown, The World of Imagery, London, 1927, p.7.

² I.A. Richards, The Philosophy of Rhetoric, New York, 1936, p.94.

³ Gertrude Buck, The Metaphor, A Study in Psychology, of Rhetoric, Ann Arbor Press, 1899, p.69.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

3

naturally poetic. Great poets more than other persons do somehow see a oneness in things that to analytic consciousness are disparate. Ever since the days of Plato and Aristotle, men have been trying to find a key to the puzzling and perennial phenomenon of imagery and in our own day eminent literary critics recognize the fact that the metaphorical process like speech or thought is an attempt of the mind or of the whole man not only to seek out and explore the world of reality but also to express through an act of the imaginative insight the marvellous order and harmony inherent in that world. A modern literary critic has told us:

There is a most remarkable weight and unanimity of evidence, both in the verse and the critical writings of English poets, that poetry's truth comes from the perception of a unity underlying all relating phenomena, and poetry's task is the perpetual discovery, through its imaging, metaphor-making faculty, of new relationships within this pattern, and the rediscovery and renovation of old ones.⁴

Another eminent critic has referred to language as "the archives of history" and "the tomb of the muses" and again as "fossil poetry" because as he declares "The poets made all the words" and "every word was once a poem".⁵ As Florence Marsh states:

⁴ C. Day Lewis, op.cit., p.34.

⁵ Ralph Waldo Emerson, Complete Work of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Centenary Edition, New York III p.21.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

4

The clue to the relationship between imagery and idea seems to lie in the relationship between language and imagery. One does not expect to find ideas in poetry expressed in the exact literal statement that results from analysis but in language that will leave the idea latent in the image. Ideas may fit into poetry in three ways: the ideas may be stated and illustrated, the ideas may be implicit within the symbol, or the ideas may be stated as an integral part of the poet's total pattern. Language and poetry alike point to the central importance of poetic imagery.⁶

The two essentials of imagery upon which critics seem to agree are: some form of sensory appeal and some form of nonliteralness or obliqueness. "Literal imagery has sensory appeal but no obliqueness; figurative imagery has obliqueness and varying degrees of sensory appeal."⁷ This brings us to the three main functions of poetic imagery classified under the headings of symbol, metaphor, and simile. The interrelations between these are actual and conscious. This has been explained and illustrated by Robin Skelton:

A poet, observing the physical world of actuality, trying to pattern an experience of life, trying to map for us the cosmos in which that experience exists, may use primary images of the sea-shore, comparing this notion to a shell, that to a grain of sand, and the other to a rock pool. By so doing he creates within the poem a contained world, a world in which these images are essential landmarks. In later poems he may, having discovered this world, explore it farther, and create images with reference to it, rather than to the physical world of reality.⁸

⁶ Florence Marsh, Wordsworth's Imagery, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952, p.6.

⁷ Joseph T. Shipley, (Editor) Dictionary of World Literature, New York: Philosophical Library, 1943, p.311.

⁸ Robin Skelton, The Poetic Pattern, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956, p.107.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

5

When the poet thus acts and creates images from his previously discovered pattern, or gestalt, he represses former imagery in order that the new pattern may stand out. And Professor Skelton goes on to show how that which was once an image may develop a secondary or even a tertiary relationship that can be readily recognized as a symbol:

If, in the first poem the poet compares poetry to a shell in the second, seeing the shell in relation to all its neighbouring images, he will regard it as having other qualities also, these qualities perhaps not being those of poetry, as such, but qualities that the shell has because it is both poetry and shell in its own marine-poetic world. Thus the shell has become a symbol, that started as a metaphor or simile.⁹

Simile, metaphor and image separately and co-ordinately indicate the path along which conquest of the invisible world is made, the span which connects the concrete with the abstract, the relationships and analogies that exist between mind and matter, the visible and the invisible. Lest someone be tempted to believe that the metaphorical process over-exaggerates these relationships, Father Stephen Brown has given us a clear and concise explanation of this harmony. Speaking of the metaphorical mode he says:

⁹ Ibid., p.107.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

6

In its most characteristic form it is a using of material objects as images of the immaterial, spiritual things. It is founded on the existence of analogies and correspondences between the various objects or phenomena of nature and between these again and human life .. man's emotional, moral and intellectual nature, between matter and mind. Imagery is a witness to the harmony between mind and matter, to the unity of all creation, and thus to the Oneness of the Author.¹⁰

Caroline F. Spurgeon whose book, Shakespeare's Imagery And What It Tells Us, has made its author an authority on this subject, suggests that when we discuss "image" we should divest our minds of the hint that the term carries with it a visual image only, and think of it, as connoting any and every imaginative picture or other experience, drawn in every way; which may come to the poet, not only through any of the senses but through the mind and emotions as well, and which he uses in the form of metaphor and simile in their widest sense, for the purposes of analogy. "I use the term "image" here, as the only available word to cover every kind of simile as well as every kind of what is really compressed simile - metaphor."¹¹

Time and again, each and every one of us has had moments of vivid insight when the veil seems lifted and we become aware of a kinship between the immaterial and the real,

¹⁰ Stephen J. Brown, The World of Imagery, London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1927, pp.17-18.

¹¹ Caroline F. Spurgeon, Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us, London, Cambridge University Press, p.5.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

7

if to this moment of intense realization were added the gift of poetic utterance the result might be as varied in its mode as the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians and the words of E.J. Pratt who so vividly describes the sufferings of St. Jean de Brebeuf with Pauline borrowings.

In journeyings often in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils from my own nation, in perils, from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils from false brethren.

In labour and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things which are without: my daily instance, the solicitude for all the churches.

Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is scandalized, and I am not on fire?

If I must needs glory, I will glory in the things that concern my infirmity.¹²

This is the manner of St. Paul's poetic phrasing, and the same imagery is found in the poet of a later day:

Through village after village we were led
In triumph with our backs shedding the skin
Under the sun .. by day upon the scaffolds,
By night brought to the cabins where, cord-bound,
We lay on the bare earth while fiery coals
Were thrown upon our bodies. A long time
Indeed and cruelly have the wicked wrought
Upon my back with sticks and iron rods.
But though at times when left alone I wept,
Yet I thanked Him who always giveth strength
To the weary I will glory in the things
Concerning my infirmity, being made
A spectacle to God and to the angels

¹² Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, Chapter XI Verses 26-30.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

8

A sport and a contempt to the barbarians
 That I was thus permitted to console
 And animate the French and Huron converts,
 Placing before their minds the thought of Him
 Who bore against Himself the contradiction
 Of sinners.¹³

Although one of these poems was written in the first century and the other was written some nineteen hundred years later, in both cases there is the moment of intense realization coupled with the gift of poetic utterance to convey to mankind both in the one instance and in the other the conviction that those who suffering for Christ, are made a "spectacle to God and to the Angels".¹⁴

On the poetic field overlaid with its special kind of cloth of gold fashioned by poetic inspiration the poet and the mystic seem to meet. This meeting and this fusion is acknowledged by Professor Wells when he states:

There must be a bridge between the finite and the infinite, the many and the one, the uttermost parts of the universe and its centre, the beginning and the end, evil and good, mind and matter, past and future, the chaos that life appears and the harmony it is found to be. Thousands of symbols have been used to express this reconciliation of seeming contradictories.¹⁵

When T.S. Eliot commended the metaphysical metaphor for combining idea and feeling in the "objective correlative"

¹³ E.J. Pratt "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.71.

¹⁴ St. Paul, Second epistle to the Corinthians, chapter xi verse 26.

¹⁵ Henry W. Wells, "New Poets from Old, New York: Columbia University Press, 1940, p.119.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

9

he formulated what amounts to a definition of the image. More recently Professor Tindall, made an elaborate study in which he combined the many agreements of other students into a single explanation:

The image, like the symbol of which it is a principle kind, appears to be a verbal embodiment of thought and feeling. An analogy ranging in scale from the relative assignment of metaphor to the unassigned. The image presents what it carries.¹⁶

The image may refer to the symbol as a whole or to some element of it and depend for part of its burden upon the context.

The images employed by Pratt and which will be singled out for consideration in this paper may sometimes be tersely suggested in a single phrase or even a word: "the shoreline curled around the neck of the ancient world";¹⁷ or at other times image may crowd upon image in a seeming arithmetical progression, as if the imagination were slowly and deliberately calculating its effects. Pratt's proneness for the extended image with the evocation of its latent significance may be due to the fact that Pratt is primarily a poet of the epic genre. Concerning the long drawn-out imagery of Shakespeare we are given the following explanation:

¹⁶ William York Tindall, The Literary Symbol, New York, Columbia University Press, 1955, p.105.

¹⁷ E.J. Pratt, "The Great Feud," p.256.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

10

The extended image belongs to the order of the epic-descriptive similies such as often appear in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* It is characteristic of the epic style to expand upon every detail and to interrupt the action time and again by broad descriptions and elaborate digressions.¹⁸

One example of this arithmetical accumulation is in the call for volunteers during the Dunkirk disaster .. the recruiting call would seem to echo from wave to wave, all the while gathering strength and intensity as the aural image becomes more pronounced:

A Call came from the Channel,
Like the wash of surf on sand,
Borne in by the winds against the chalk escarpments,
Into the harbours, up the rivers, along the estuaries,
And but one word in the call.¹⁹

Again the image may be presented in a single word by means of which a telling analogy is at once perceived:

But with the impulse governed by the raw
Mechanics of its birth, it drifted.²⁰

In this case, the one word "birth" gives the key to the tremendous symbolism of the entire poem. The iceberg ceases to be inanimate and becomes a living force, a hostile element which must be met and grappled with.

In still another poem the imagery requires an entire stanza in order to complete the portrayal of death blossoming forth into life.

¹⁸ Clemen, Wolfgang H., The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery, London, Methuen, 1953, p.23.

¹⁹ E.J. Pratt, "Dunkirk", p.1.

²⁰ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.100.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

11

Three hundred years have passed, and the winds of God
 Which blew over France are blowing once more through the
 That bulwark the shores of the great Fresh Water Sea.
 Over the wastes abandoned by human tread,
 Where only the bittern's cry was heard at dusk;

Over the lakes where the wild ducks have built their nests,
 The skies that had banked their fires are shining again
 With the stars that guided the feet of Jogues and Brebeuf.
 The years as they turned have ripened the Martyrs' seed,
 And the ashes of St. Ignace are glowing afresh.²¹

This is a land abandoned by human tread, a land of ashes, a land which echoes the bittern's call, a land of banked fires; and yet this accumulation of desolation and devastation images builds up to be a land reclaimed. The winds of God blow once more, nests are rebuilt, fires glow anew, stars shine, and the years have ripened the martyrs' seed. Not only are the phrase-pictures significant but also no single word is used haphazardly, each word carries its own poignant and meaningful picture: blew, bulwark, abandoned, tread, dusk, banked, shining, guided, turned, ripened, ashes, seed. The imagery herein contained is indeed vivid. The images blend into a cosmic whole which expresses Pratt's reiterated credo of annihilation and then rebirth .. the traditional picture of the human-eternal destiny, which St. John very beautifully and poetically expressed long ago:

²¹ E.J. Pratt, "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.94.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

12

Unless the grain of wheat falling to the ground die
 Itself remaineth alone;
 But if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.²²

In any study such as this, there is bound to be great diversity of opinion concerning the image and its component parts. In this case, however, the differences do not seem to limit but rather to illumine the area that they investigate; it is to the glory of the twentieth century that the many implications of imagery are being explored with zeal and intelligence.

Professor Spurgeon has also come upon this diversity and states:

One could easily devote a volume to arriving at the definition of an image, elaborating, safeguarding, and illustrating it, and to discussing what metaphor is and the philosophy that lies behind it.²³

Cleanth Brooks has made serious and fruitful investigations on this subject and while he is convinced that tension, conflict and paradox are at the very heart of poetry itself, he regards the poem as a living organism having a vital identity of matter and form.²⁴ Following this trend of thought, or rather leading the way towards it, Jacques Maritain, whose potent and authoritative words few

²² St. John, Chapter XII Verse 32.

²³ Caroline F. Spurgeon, op.cit., p.6.

²⁴ Cleanth Brooks, The Well Wrought Urn, New York, Harper, 1947, p.178.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

13

modern critics would question, tells us:

All works of art are made of body, soul and spirit. I call body the language of the work, its discourse, the whole of its technical means; the soul, the operative idea, the "verbum cordis" of the artist .. it is indeed born of the abundance of the heart; the spirit, the poetry.²⁵

But a multiplicity of distinctions and a too prolonged investigation would, at this point, be of questionable value and would serve little to clarify the situation or prove the present thesis.

In simplest language, the image is the little word-picture used by the poet to illustrate, illumine and embellish his thought. It is a description or an idea which by comparison or analogy, stated or understood, transmits to us, through the emotions and the associations it arouses, something of the wholeness, the depth and the richness of the way that the writer views, conceives or has felt what he is telling us. In nature it must be sensuous, it must achieve a vital fusion, and it must bestow new knowledge. It can be simple and clear or complex and ambiguous. It should partly clarify and partly obscure. The three essential elements of this image begotten of the metaphorical mode of intellection are: the sensuous, which causes it to be vivid; the emotional, which makes it intense; and the intellectual, which bespeaks of profundity. It is imaginative only as it

²⁵ Jacques Maritain, Art and Poetry, translated by E. de P. Matthews, New York, Meridan Press, 1943, pp.99-100.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

14

is the product of these three elements taken together; for the intelligence under the pressure of emotion works upon the sensuous and produces a poetic whole which in our day is termed a "poetic image". There is no mechanical or technical blueprint for this image, different ages have borne witness to its strength leaning sometimes in one direction, sometimes in another. During the seventeenth century, imagery was intellectual and ingenious, during the eighteenth century it was formal and comprehensive, during the nineteenth century it was emotional and colorful, and during our present twentieth century it is paradoxical and obscure. An image may have any one or any possible combination of these qualities, but it must not exist for itself alone, it must stand as an integral part of a unified whole. The method by which a poem achieves its effect is chiefly by a metaphorical conception, a seeing of things in terms of other things which emphasizes a hitherto unsuspected identity. Analogy or likeness between dissimilar things is the fact underlying the possibility and the reality of metaphor. In the act of the creative imagination, it is this analogical and metaphorical process that has the principal role to play. It is this power and this mode of activity that is responsible for the creation of images, metaphors and symbols. There is, of course, a hierarchy in the world of imagery. The creative power that would produce

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

15

metaphors and symbols of intensity and depth is clearly greater and of more value than that which is needed to produce a simple sense impression, but in spite of this hierarchy the "world of images"²⁶ is alien to any caste system, for barriers subside, dividing lines recede, walls disappear, as image merges into metaphor and metaphor evolves into symbol. After studying this fusion and pondering its power, we can agree with Yeats who tells us: "It is hard to say just where Allegory and Symbolism melt into one another, but it is not hard to say where either comes to perfection."²⁷

The debt that the writer owes to other students who have laboured strenuously to clarify the meaning of imagery is evident. As the thesis progresses a careful effort will be made by footnote and bibliographical data to acknowledge all borrowings; but it should be stated here that from the works Caroline Spurgeon: "Shakespeare's Imagery, etc; Florence Marsh: Wordsworth's Imagery; and Joseph O'Neill: Imagery of Longfellow; have come the ideas for the categories and the divisions used in the thesis. While from the studies of C. Day Lewis: The Poetic Image; and Robin Skelton, The Poetic Pattern; have the main outlines for the definitions

²⁶ John Livingstone Lowes, The Road to Xanadu, Boston, Ginn, 1927, p.429.

²⁷ W.B. Yeats, "Symbolism in Painting," in Essays, New York, Reynal and Hitchcock, 1924, p.182.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

16

been drawn up. The writer has striven to adhere to the standards set by such recognized authorities in this field of literature and to make this study an objective one. Yet in spite of such a conscientious effort, the reader may find at times that a subjective element has entered; it could not be otherwise. Each person approaches the study of imagery with his own preconceived ideas, with his own personal intellectual powers, with tastes, opinions and beliefs that can not be cast aside, therefore diversity in judgment must be expected. At no time will there be any effort to glorify what is ignoble, to laud rather than to censure or to read in analogies that are foreign to the thought or the content. The thesis contains a sincere study of the poetry of a highly talented artist of whom Canada may justly be proud.

Universality of Images

There is a universality in the imagery employed by Edwin John Pratt, but a universality that seems to be etched upon a background of rocky shores and dashing waves; a universality in which tempest and strife, conflict and struggle meet and mingle in a muted submission or resignation.

The great bulk of Pratt's metaphors and similes are drawn from those aspects of life in which he is most interested; but there are others drawn not from what he has actually experienced or witnessed but from what he had

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

17

studied, from his heart's deepest interests and almost from heredity. The image of nature, the image of the sea, abounds in every poem because this Newfoundland boy was reared beside the stormy Atlantic, but not less evident is the image of grace .. the cross of Christianity finds a place in many or most of his poems. This same Newfoundland-born son of a Methodist minister has inherited the dislikes and likes of his father - the hatred for sin, and the love of the sinner. He had once decided to dedicate his own life to the service of his Church. The lessons instilled by good Christian parents during childhood and youth left an indelible mark that time has not effaced and this is apparent in the poetry as well as in the life of a poet who has proven the universality of his imagery in lines such as:

Rich gifts unknown to kings were duly brought
 At dawn and sunset and at cloudless noons.
 Gifts from the sea-gods and the sun who wrought
 Cascades and rainbows; flung them in festoons
 Over the spires, with emerald, amethyst,
 Sapphire and pearl out of their fiery mist.
 And music followed when a litany,
 Begun with the ring of foam bells and the purl
 Of linguals as the edges cut the sea,
 Crashed upon a rising storm with whirl
 Of floes from far-off spaces where Death rides
 The darkened belfries of his evening tides.
 Within the sunlight, vast, immaculate!
 Beyond all reach of earth in majesty,
 It passed on southwards slowly to its fate -
 To be drawn down by the inveterate sea,
 Without one chastening fire made to start
 From altars built around its palor heart.²⁸

²⁸ E.J. Pratt, "The Sea-Cathedral" p.212.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

18

This universality of image is almost the strength of the Pratt-poetry. It is portrayed not so much in diversity of image, such as images of fire, food, drink, birds, animals, reptiles, sleep, torture, sport, war, weapons, trades and those which may be termed mythological although all of these may be found; rather it is a cosmic blending of imagery, the interlacing and interlocking of images whose startling vividness and contrast forms a basic pattern. From "The Sea-Cathedral" a single short poem, it is evident that the imagery of nature and the imagery of grace are intertwined and are representative of the whole art of Edwin John Pratt. Even the title of the poem "The Sea-Cathedral" proclaims this fact. Images of nature recur in phrase after phrase and in line after line and are designated by such words as, dawn/ sunset/ cloudless noons/ sun/ cascades/ rainbows/ mist/ foam/ sea/ rising storm/ flocs/ tides/ sunlight/ earth/ sea/fire. The universality of the word-pictures of nature seems to be almost equated by those that bespeak the soul-life, the life of grace. "Rich gifts unknown to kings", must remind the reader of the long ago gold, frankincense and myrrh brought by the wise men to Bethlehem; while spires/ litany/ ring of foam bells/ death rides the darkened belfries/ immaculate/ on chastening fire/ altars built around its palor heart, all carry the reader to the symbolism of liturgy and ritual that the poem so well portrays. Just as "The

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

19

Sea-Cathedral" combines many images of nature and of grace into one composite whole, so by means of a universality of imagery all the poetry of E.J. Pratt proclaims the major interest of the author - his allegiance to nature, and his allegiance to grace.

Images of Nature

Nature imagery claims the primary place in the poetry of Edwin John Pratt - and the type of nature that is allied to the sea seems to be all-important: storms and wrecks and rocky shores; the boundless and fathomless depth of the ocean, the ebb and flow of the tide; the tossing waves that bring disaster; the management of ships; the heroism of skilled seamen; the technical knowledge and the marine craftsmanship, all these are basic in many of the poems. Nature images are also found in the weather and its changes; the look and portend of the sky; the varying seasons; nipping frosts and clouds and sunshine; the wind and storm - each and every one of these reveal the particular aspects of nature which in some especial manner fashioned the environment in childhood and in youth of this Canadian poet. In the imagery so vividly expressed in the following lines, one can almost see and hear the sea as well as sense its mighty power:

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

20

A call came from the channel
Like the wash of surf on sand.²⁹

and also in the muted cadence of the following lines, there is mystery, there is a nearness to the unknown:

The fog has scarfed the moon and the stars,
The curtains are drawn on the tides.³⁰

The same mystery is present in the following lines but the vagueness drifts away and the unknown becomes more tangible.

One night we heard his footfall - One September night -
In the outskirts of a village near the sea.
There was a moment when the storm
Delayed its fist, when the surf fell
Like velvet on the rocks - a moment only.³¹

And in images within a single line like the following one can read the relentless power of nature - a remorselessness that none can combat:

There is no fury upon the earth, like the fury
under the sea.³²

From the longer poems also there are sea images, holding power and majesty but also holding suffering and danger.

Rapids and rocks are easier than the steeps
of Calvary.³³

²⁹ E.J. Pratt, op.cit., "Dunkirk", p.1.

³⁰ Ibid., "The Radio In the Ivory Tower", p.11.

³¹ Ibid., "Come Away Death", p.16.

³² Ibid., "Silences", p.17.

³³ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.58.

And in short glimpses such as the following, we know that man will not give up without a struggle - he will combat and if he does not conquer, he will at least be able to experience the exaltation in his defeat.

The hour had called for argument more rife
 With the gamblers' sacrificial bids for life,
 The final manner native to the breed
 Of men forging decision into deed -
 Of getting down again into the sea,
 And testing rowlocks in an open boat,
 Of grappling with the storm-king bodily,
 And placing Northern fingers on his throat.³⁴

Imagery of nature will be dealt with in detail in a later chapter, therefore, these few instances are sufficient to prove that nature for Pratt was a force, a storm-king; it was no wasteland, rather it was an actual power that would conquer or be conquered.

Images of Grace

When imagery of grace is referred to in this paper, the writer will mean every image and word-picture of spiritual import or that touches even remotely on the soul-life of man. This imagery of grace is the very fabric of the poem "Brebeuf and His Brethren" - and for this reason the poem is often referred to as a religious poem. Pratt, however, does not confine his soul-sentiments to "Brebeuf and His Brethren". These sentiments are found in abundance

³⁴ E.J. Pratt "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.156.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

22

in the sea poems, in the war poems, and in most of the shorter poems. One literary critic of the poetry of Edwin John Pratt has stated:

He (Pratt) is a poet of the greatest realism, one whose work is a living proof that: "The path lies through Gethsemane".³⁵

Over and over again in the shorter poems, we come upon the imagery of Christianity and the symbolism of salvation.

We who have learned to clench
Our fists and raise our lightless sockets,
To morning skies after the midnight raids,
Yet cocked our ears to bugles on the barricades,
And in cathedral rubble found a way to quench
A dying thirst within a Galilean Valley.³⁶

In the Galilean Valley will be found the living water to quench the dying thirst - a water such that he who drinks of it "will thirst no longer".

Not earthly splendor but that which glows beyond the horizon of Time, on the dawn of Eternity, is found in the closing lines of another short lyric.

I knew, by some high trick of sight and hearing,
Your heart was lured beyond the window sills,
Adventuring where the Valley mists were clearing,
And silver horns were blowing on the hills.³⁷

³⁵ John Sutherland, The Poetry of E.J. Pratt, p.108.

³⁶ E.J. Pratt, "The Truant", p.314.

³⁷ Ibid., "Old Age", p.227.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

23

Your heart was lured beyond the window sills to the mansions of eternity. The heart of her who had always been so content with home and loved ones would now go awandering, the mists of the valley - that same Galilean Valley, were lifting; the veil between Time and Eternity was parting, a new vision was beckoning to the soul, luring it with Promise Eternal and silver bugles. Priceless melodies were being wafted from the hills of the New Jerusalem.

In another short lyric written in memory of a beloved student of Dr. Pratt, we can read in a new and unique way the story of St. Paul's surrender to the Divine Conqueror:

I have finished the course, I have kept the faith
For the rest there is laid up for me a crown of justice³⁸

You left the field and no one heard
A murmur from you. We,
With burning look and stubborn word,
Challenged the Referee -
Why he forbade you to complete
The run, hailing you back
Before your firm and eager feet
Were half-way round the track;
Unless he had contrived, instead,
To start you on a race,
With an immortal course ahead,
And daybreak on your face.³⁹

In the longer poems also, the reader comes upon a wealth of imagery that pictures in metaphor or simile or even in a vague derivative manner the life of the spirit.

³⁸ St. Paul to Timothy, Ch.IV, Verse 8.

³⁹ E.J. Pratt, op.cit., "The Decision", p.228.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

24

In line after line of "Brebeuf and His Brethren" we come upon Scriptural references that may not be overlooked.

In "The Titanic", which by every right might be classed as a nature poem, a sea poem, one in which one might expect that nature should have precedence, the image of grace predominates, it is the *raison d'être*, the motive force of the entire poem.

The narrative expresses not a sense of illusion but a feeling of the greatest certainty; and the tragedy is accepted with an intuitive faith in the power of Christ's redemption.⁴⁰

In the poem itself this calm resignation and acceptance of tragedy which has been said to bespeak "intuitive faith in the power of Christ's redemption" is nowhere more clearly expressed than in the closing lines of the poem:

And out there in the starlight, with no trace
Upon it of its deed but the last wave
From the Titanic fretting at its base,
Silent, composed, ringed by its icy broods,
The grey shape with the palaeolithic face
Was still the master of the longitudes.⁴¹

The hopelessness of the final conflict is only subdued and replaced by calm submission because the Resurrection is just beyond "the last wave".

In "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", the Master, God of the commonplace, everyday action comes time and time again

⁴⁰ John Sutherland, *op.cit.*, p.49.

⁴¹ E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.51.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

25

into the poem. Nothing is left to mere chance, the reader is aware that Wisdom Divine has planned all.

To the Master's lawful word obedient.⁴²

The power of prayer and grace recurs in the
absolution whose efficacy is urged in:

Feeling that from an older faith would come
The virtue of a rubric yet unspoken
For the transition of a soul, a crumb
Of favour from a cupboard not bereft
Of all by the night's intercessions.⁴³

This thesis will attempt to prove that the greatness of Pratt's poetry depends upon a blending and a balance of the images of nature and the images of grace. The towering strength of the one and the firm foundation-depth of the other have made the poetry as great as it is.

Pratt has told us that Gethsemane is as the grail of history, a cure for all failure and suffering as well as the fashioning-place for the "crown" of achievement.⁴⁴

In this statement, Mr. Sutherland is referring to the final stanza of "From Stone to Steel":

The road goes up, the road goes down -
Let Java or Geneva be -
But whether to the cross or crown,
The path lies through Gethsemane.⁴⁵

Yet the statement might with equal justice refer to almost any one of the Pratt poems that is representative of

42 E.J. Pratt, "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.135.

43 Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.151.

44 John Sutherland, op.cit., p.24.

45 E.J. Pratt, "From Stone to Steel", p.20.

the author's art and will therefore be considered in the thesis.

Pratt's Attitude Towards Life,
Portrayed in Images and Symbols.

Students of the poetry of Edwin John Pratt have called the author robust, energetic, masculine, genial, muscular, vital, exuberant, hearty, high-spirited and a score of other adjectives that they hoped would in some slight degree enable the reader to gauge the poetic quality and to evaluate his personality. What these students wished to convey was that the vitality of the man and his attitude towards life were expressed in the poems. This poet is a profound and original philosopher but along pathways that are sometimes remote:

the scholar and the common man are united in him, he is unusually responsive to the actual and the concrete, that which belongs to first-hand living. He rarely goes beyond what every man has experienced, or could experience, into the realm of literary complexities reserved for the few. His sources are democratic.⁴⁶

In this day and age, we have need of Pratt's philosophy and of his general, healthy view of life; we can derive inspiration from his appreciation of nature as the handiwork of God and a solace to struggling, suffering humanity. Always in nature and above all in the natural strength of his

⁴⁶ Carl F. Klinck, "A Poet At Work", p.41.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

27

beloved Newfoundland, the poet works out a way to pass from the strife of Time along eternal pathways to the Heart of God.

Tide and wind and crag,
Sea-weed and sea-shell
And broken rudder -
And the story is told
Of human veins and pulses,
Of eternal pathways of fire,
Of dreams that survive the night,
Of doors held ajar in storms.⁴⁷

For Pratt, dreams always survive the night of tempest and at dawn there will ever be "a door ajar". There is always high nobility, a delicate perception and a singular beauty of expression in the imagery, and what critics have previously failed to note is that Pratt's attitude towards life is revealed in his imagery and symbolism as well as in his narrative strength and in his epic capabilities - great as these latter are.

For Pratt, nature without man is brutal, irrational and unspiritual. The spirit or the conscience of nature exists only in man. Professor Wells has thus stated the same thought:

These hard lessons Pratt learned as a boy and a young man, brooding over the austere Newfoundland shore and listening to church bells that tolled in his ear like bell buoys or like surf as they commemorated the loss of sailors unreturning from the sea.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ E.J. Pratt, "Newfoundland", p.167.

⁴⁸ Henry W. Wells, "Epic of Whaling", p.161.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

28

The lesson is stark and dim and uncompromising but always the Christian poet catches a glimpse of the ray of light shining through, as did those who peered hopefully through Channel mists:

To stand hushed before the Canterbury tapers.⁴⁹

This Christian view of or attitude towards life is explicitly stated in several of the poems which will be considered in the thesis and it is implied in many others. The images and symbols that build up as the poem progresses are the author's sole means of communicating his attitude and of conveying his philosophy, for "Pratt as a rule happily avoids mere didacticism".⁵⁰ Notwithstanding his hard and realistic details, there are larger and deeper meanings than those which lie directly on the surface.

Under Pratt's skilful poetic diction details, seemingly trivial, are outlined with such accuracy and deliberation that the reader is forced to agree that there are no inconsequential actions, everything in life is great, because everything becomes part of the cosmic wholeness of Time.

In order to make a brief comparison between the greatest of nature poets, William Wordsworth, and the poet herein considered, we may state that Wordsworth's theory of the imagination must be correlated with his insistence on

⁴⁹ E.J. Pratt, "Dunkirk", p.3.

⁵⁰ Henry W. Wells, "Epic of Whaling", p.161.

the truth in poetry and his principal object in those poems was:

..... to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect; and, further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement.⁵¹

Edwin John Pratt also "chose incidents and situations from common life". The bailing of a boat is at best a homely task, even though life and death often depend upon it. Pratt describes the bailing of a whaleboat with more vigorous art than many another poet might display in using the most conventionally poetic and sublime subject-matter. The passage affords an excellent measure of his powers with the imagery of action:

The skipper's whaleboat tore through tunnels
Of drifting foam, with listing gunwales,
Now to starboard, now to port,
The hemp ran through the leaden chock,
Making the casing searing hot;
The second oarsman snatched and shot
The piggin like a shuttlecock,
Bailing the swamping torrent out,
Or throwing sidelong spurts to dout
The flame, when with the treble turn
The loggerhead began to burn.⁵²

⁵¹ Ernest de Selincourt and Helen Darbishere, The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads", Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1940, Vol.2, p.386.

⁵² E.J. Pratt, "The Cachalot", p.176.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

30

In his proximity to everyday incidents and to the situations of ordinary life, Pratt seems in this instance to be a close adherent to the Wordsworthian theory.

In the poems of Pratt, man though weak struggles on and gains strength and power and splendor through his conflict with nature, and although he may seemingly be conquered by a stronger will, yet victory will result from the conquest.

The years as they turned have ripened the martyrs' seed
And the ashes of St. Ignace are glowing afresh.⁵³

Brebeuf is slain and the Christian missions in New France have been destroyed but "the years as they turned" also destroyed the enemy - and man did finally triumph, "the ashes of St. Ignace are glowing afresh". With Pratt that relighted spark after apparent extinction is the unum necessarium and it may be traced in his entire poetic pattern. It reveals his attitude towards life. Life is a struggle - it is worth a gallant effort; man will be overthrown by superior forces, by an enemy either mechanical or natural, yet all is not lost, there will be a Resurrection:

Now listen! If the veil should part
Within this holy ritual,
You'll hear a voice call to my heart
More lovely than a madrigal.⁵⁴

There is no room for doubt in this poem. In spite of the "if"; the word "veil" brings the assurance that there is but

⁵³ E.J. Pratt, "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.94.

⁵⁴ Ibid., "The Empty Room", p.96.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

31

a thin filmy substance separating speculation and uncertainty from Reality. Again in another poem the author's implicit faith in Divine Mercy is revealed:

I could not see; I only knew
That those who had been standing, waiting there,
Were passing through.⁵⁵

There is very little need to multiply examples here of Edwin John Pratt's attitude towards life as it is portrayed in his imagery and symbolism. The pattern becomes conventional as one reads his portrayal of struggle after struggle. The striving is never futile - life is a combat and this is the price to be paid for eternal gain. This same truth has been spoken of by John Sutherland "as the exaltation which has its source in a recollection of Christ's triumph, of a compassion able to annul death and sin; in fact, it can be most accurately described as the exaltation of compassion."⁵⁶

The Poetic Pattern
All Things Blending Into One

Individual metaphors and similes in Pratt's poetry, considered either in isolation or within the content of single poems, are so subordinate in nature, so unobtrusive in effect, as at first sight to be disappointing. There are

⁵⁵ E.J. Pratt, "The Iron Door", p.220.

⁵⁶ John Sutherland, op.cit., p.17.

poems that seem starkly bare of these poetic devices; it would seem as though Pratt were sloughing off all ornament, and presenting the thing in itself. There are other times when the imagery is rich and figurative - but in no instance is ornament alone the object. Careful reading and a delving into undercurrent of thought is the only way to prove that what might seem a negative character of metaphor and simile is in reality positive, it is a force that is strong and real.

Let us look, for example, at the central passage in "Toll of the Bells" and note the unobtrusive nature of the imagery that is characteristic of Pratt:

For neither trumpet-blast, nor the hoarse din
Of guns, nor the drooped signals from those mute
Banners, could find a language to salute
The frozen bodies that the ship brought in.
To-day the vaunt is with the grave. Sorrow
Has raked up faith and burned it like a pile
Of driftwood, scattering the ashes while
Cathedral voices anthemed God's To-morrow.⁵⁷

The imagery is almost prosaic, it is as simple as if the author had come upon it accidentally - whereas in reality it is an extended and potent metaphor; a metaphor that in some measure controls the structure of this poem and also forms the dominant thread running through the entire poetic pattern. The figures here - trumpet-blast, hoarse din, drooped signals, mute banners, frozen bodies,

⁵⁷ E.J. Pratt, "Toll of the Bells", p.199.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

33

are certainly not decorative; but they are as Wordsworth might have expressed it, "a constituent part and power or function in the thought".⁵⁸ The thought, however, centres not in that which is vanquished but rather in the hereafter glory, the vaunt of the grave, raked-up faith, scattered ashes and above all "God's To-morrow". These are viewed spatially and all previous images of sound and sight converge to convey a unique meaning of permanence which must be the paradoxical and final outcome of every disintegration.

In some instances in the poetry of Pratt there are individual images so startling and with such slight disparity that they need not be developed at length to explain the connection. Death and the rattle of a drum from quarters unmistakable, the shark and a submarine, the waves have lion-hunger and tiger leap, the rocks are "mastiffs"⁵⁹ guarding the coast of Newfoundland; images and metaphors such as these, are representative, but we also come upon lengthy and elaborated images that must be quoted in full to render a just illustration. It has been very properly observed by Maynard Mack that in images where there is great disparity between tenor and vehicle - "as in some of the poetry of Donne where lovers and compasses are dealt with - the power of the comparison is limited, for the small area of likeness

⁵⁸ Wordsworth, "Preface to Lyrical Ballads" edition of 1815, p.440, note 2.

⁵⁹ E.J. Pratt, "Newfoundland" p.167.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

34

leaves no room for the image to expand."⁶⁰ Normal and traditional associations nourish imagery in such a way that there is little or no need for them to be developed to any considerable length; they already have, as Mack phrases it, reserve power, and Wordsworth proclaims that truly imaginative images are sustained by "the nature of things". In his Preface to Lyrical Ballads, he leaves no doubt in the mind of the reader concerning the clarity or simplicity of images:

When the Imagination frames a comparison, if it does not strike on the first presentation, a sense of truth of the likeness, from the moment that it is perceived, grows - and continues to grow - upon the mind; the resemblance depending less upon outline of form and feature, than upon expression and effect; less upon the casual and the outstanding, than upon inherent and internal, properties.⁶¹

Nearer to our own time Robin Skelton (1956) says the same thing but says it less obscurely:

The poem, as we have seen, is different. We can clearly state its main theme; its subsidiary themes are related to that theme; it is not composed of conflicting but of harmonizing parts. It has a recognizable beginning and a definable end. It does not exist in the middle of a host of other poems, some of which will continue to develop after it is done; nor does it exist in a continuum of poetry the parts of which are impossible adequately to isolate, as does an experience. Thus we can see that the poem, in patterning an experience, patterns only the essential core of that experience, and that the poem as experience has a coherence, a definition, and a unity, which is almost never found in our experience of any other part of life.⁶²

⁶⁰ Maynard Mack, Pope and His Contemporaries, "Wit and Poetry and Pope: Some Observations on His Imagery", Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1949, pp.23-24.

⁶¹ W. Wordsworth, Preface to Lyrical Ballads, p.441.

⁶² Robin Skelton, The Poetic Pattern, p.77.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

35

The relationship between images in any given poem must depend upon internal and inherent properties and not upon mere Hartleian association or continuity in time or space. In this connection, the reader may recall in the poetry of Pratt such lines as:

For the bandit
With occult fingering
Had tangled up
The four threads of the compass.⁶³

The waves still ring the knell
Of ships, that pass at night.⁶⁴

Then following the omen of a lull,
The advent of a wave which like a wall
Crashed down in valleys.⁶⁵

But many of these sailors wise and old,
Who pondered on this weird mesmeric power,
Gathered together, lit their pipes and told
Of portents hidden in the natal hour.⁶⁶

Within each poem, although a single image may not determine the structure, the separate images do develop a pattern about a central image, which is the uncertainty and the necessity for combat. Each of the poems referred to above is knit together into one pattern by the intervention and the overruling power of Fate which looms threateningly,

⁶³ E.J. Pratt, "The Fog", p.186.

⁶⁴ Ibid., "The Way of Cape Race", p.188.

⁶⁵ Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.151.

⁶⁶ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.100.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

36

and inevitably in each illustration noted. In "The Fog", the poet develops the coming of this disturbance in the atmosphere. At first it is almost imperceptible and creeps in as a kitten might come to be caressed and then continue on its way, then by numerous brief images the pattern is fashioned, the danger is detected and the fate that is overshadowing the sea-craft cannot be ignored, the fog came from somewhere unknown; it did not touch the eyes but robbed them of sight; then its ominous silence forebodes tragedy; it drew the song from our throats and finally as the central image is etched the pattern is no longer uncertain for a "bandit" with "occult" fingering tangles the "threads of the compass" and life can no longer be charted.

At this point in the thesis it is not the intention of the writer to present a series of detailed exegeses of poems or to develop in more detail this topic of linking-images. But as the discussion of Pratt's major symbols advances, the reader will come upon a sufficient number of similar incidents to develop the present topic more adequately.

The real strength and power of Pratt's metaphors and similies emerges not only from the single image although, as will be seen in further chapters, that too is a potent factor, but rather from the entire body of his poetry, for his images are not only reliant on the very nature of things, but they are supported by each other so that every image has

behind it the reserve strength of the entire body of the poetry and of the philosophy and credo of the poet.

Edwin John Pratt is great not only on account of isolated images which are potent and diversified, but also on account of symbolic segments of poems and even from the final product of each poetic endeavor. The reader who would hope to glean even a "speaking acquaintance" with the author through the knowledge of one poem, or any literary critic who might demand that any given poem be understood without reference to the entire body of his poetry is like an architect who, while contemplating a heap of doors and windows and thresholds might try to visualize the gothic edifice which these were destined to help form. Throughout Pratt's poetry, natural objects are seen in terms of other natural objects or nature may echo the sentiments of the human world directly; that is nature may be bequeathed, for the moment, the power of sharing human personality:

And Silences, a hooded band,
Like partents of catastrophe,
Tip-toed expectant on the land,
And mummied about the open sea.⁶⁷

But more often, Pratt seems to wish to honour man with attributes of nature as though he would force man to be humble and to see nature other than man's slave.

⁶⁷ E.J. Pratt, "The Great Feud", p.26.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

38

His ear was as the prism is to light,
Unravelling meanings from a skein of tone.⁶⁸

Poetic beauty demands more than the senses can give; it results from what has been attained through the senses and what is thought and felt as a result of response to the sensuous, and this integrates into a whole by means of which beauty is experienced.

A great crosscurrent of imagery results wherein the human is natural, the inanimate is animate, and the natural is alive and spiritual. No other crosscurrent of imagery is stronger or more consistent than that maintained in the short poem "Fire". In order to illustrate its poignant pattern and the tracing of its imagery it will be necessary to quote it in part in this chapter:

Around this crimson source of human fears,
Where rites and myths have built their scaffoldings,
With smoke of hecatombs upon her wings,
And chased by shadows of the coming years,
Our planet-moth tries blindly to survive
Her spinning vertigo as fugitive.
But stronger than its terror is the deep
Allurement, primary to our blood, which holds
Safety and warmth in unimpassioned folds,
Night and the candle - quietness of sleep;
With the day's bugles silent, when the will,
That feeds the tumult of our natures, rests
Along the broken arteries of its quests.
So, let the yellowing world revolve until
The old Sun's ultimate expatriate
On this exotic hearth leans forth to claim
Promethean virtue from a dying flame,

68 E.J. Pratt, "Behind the Log", p.20.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

39

His fingers tapered - less to mitigate
 The chilling accident of his sojourn
 Than to invoke his ultimate return.⁶⁹

This one poem has a crosscurrent of imagery that comprises analogies which embody personification, architecture, power, silence, war, nature and prayer.

Other, lesser crosscurrents run fairly steadily and regularly throughout the poetry of Pratt. The voice of the waves may be the voice of conscience, the flight of the bird may be the swift passage of time, the decay of the foliage may be the death of man as an individual or the utter destruction of an entire army. In fact everything appears in terms of everything else. The poet is constantly recording the impression made by some new object by a reference to previous experience for "it is an invariable quality of the true poetic mind to see things in new ways to turn them to shapes, to find new relationships abstract and concrete."⁷⁰ Attributes of one object are attributed to another so that the images make the "two objects unite and coalesce in a just comparison".⁷¹ For example in a poem "The Depression Ends", the poet would "communize the total yields/of summer in the Elysian fields."⁷² In a poem "Frost" we find

⁶⁹ E.J. Pratt, "Fire", p.96.

⁷⁰ Yelland, Jones, Easton (publishers) Handbook of Literary Terms, p.95.

⁷¹ W. Wordsworth, Preface of Lyrical Ballads, Edition of 1815, p.438.

⁷² E.J. Pratt, "The Depression Ends", p.306.

DEFINITIONS AND APPROACH

40

"The Kremlin was on fire".⁷³ This brief and cursory glance at a panoramic view of the poetry of E.J. Pratt proves that there is a poetic pattern, not chanced upon haphazardly, but a consistent blending and in which metaphor and simile make up the connecting tissue.

All things blend into one in still another fashion, however. We notice that the isolated image does not always and solely of its own accord reveal the entire plan of the author. We notice also that images support each other, and that symbols evolve from a crosscurrent of imagery, but this is just the prelude to an understanding of Pratt and to an appreciation of his technique. In order to enter more deeply into his scheme of poetic revelation the reader must inter-relate not only the imagery of nature and the imagery of grace, but also the visual and the aural image; as well as the sensuous, the emotional and the intellectual element in each separate image; only then, by a complete blending and a fusion that leads on to a "poetic oneness"⁷⁴ will the poet and his work be known. It is on this aspect of the study of his imagery that the present thesis will be concentrated for in this is revealed the true poetic pattern.

⁷³ E.J. Pratt, "Frost", p.231.

⁷⁴ Stephen J. Brown, op.cit., pp.17-18.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

It is not necessary to dwell upon the fact that Pratt's poetry is rich in the imagery that appeals to the eye. The visual sense is recognized by all to be the gateway through which a large portion of life reaches the poet. The registration, the description, and the interpretation of the actual depends so completely upon the faculties of the mind and the imagination that to deal adequately with the sense of sight almost amounts to dealing with the man as a whole, and with his work in its entirety.

The sea seems to have a universal appeal for this poet. Its every mood attracts or repels him; its length, and breadth, and depth, and height, each in turn imparts to the poet a surface and a scope proportionate to his own vast and boundless vision.

Pratt is a poet of action; the more we study the main groups of images which constitute the greatest part of his imagery, the clearer it becomes that there is one quality or characteristic in them all which overpoweringly attracts him throughout, and that quality is movement: nature and natural objects in motion.

In other words it is the "life of things" which appeals to him, stimulates him, and enchants him, rather than beauty of colour or form or even significance; although each of these has a part to play that may not be overlooked. This

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

42

fact of Pratt's love of movement is a good example of how a study of the subject-matter of his images may throw light upon his poetic technique, and supply the key to his poetic style. Thus it leads us to note how constantly in description it is this aspect of vitality or life that he seizes upon and portrays; so that many of his most memorable and unapproachable lines are charged with this quality, which is often conveyed by a single word.

His use of verbs of movement is a study in itself, and one of his outstanding characteristics is the way in which by the introduction of verbs of movement, about things that are motionless, or rather that are abstractions and cannot have physical movement, he gives life to the whole phrase:

This little face will never know
Cut of wind or bite of snow:
 The sea will never wind its sheet
 Around those pallid hands and feet.

Nor shall its sleeping heart, grown cold
 After a pulse of life, unfold
 That futile challenge on the face
 Of one who with a last embrace

The underlining in quotations has been done by writer of the thesis in order to bring into clearer focus of the reader the words to be noted most especially. This method is also employed by Professor Spurgeon in her study of Shakespearian imagery see Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us, p.61.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

43

Could only cheat the earth to save
 The plunder for another grave:
 But in that hour of battle she
Forgot the patience of the sea.¹

Not only with verbal force does the poet imply movement and activity and even cessation in the above poem, but also the nouns challenge and plunder and battle and patience convey by crystallized and concentrated action that cryptic significance which emphasizes motion although it be expressed in static form.

She took her name beneath according skies,
 With ringing harbour cheers, and in the lee
 Of hills derived her birthright to the sea.²

From every quarter came the night confounding
 The unhorizoned sea with sky and air,
 And to the crew of the Antinoe -- despair.³

Even in the poems that are classed as the most technical, and in whose phraseology, accuracy of detail plays the leading and the all-important role, the reader may still find this supremacy of movement to be the life force:

Under such cloaks the morrow could not enter --
 Their gravitas had seized a geologic centre
 And triumphed over subcutaneous pain.⁴

1 E.J. Pratt, "One Hour Of Life", p.203.

2 Ibid., "The Ritual", p.202.

3 Ibid., "The Roosevelt and The Antinoe", p.149.

4 Ibid., "The Stoics", p.27.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

44

The poet continually in this way endows inanimate and motionless objects with a sense of life:

Nickle, copper and steel rang their quotations to the
skies.⁵

Before the winds of God had learned to strew
His harvest-sweepings on a winter sea
To feed the primal hungers of the reef.⁶

Like a quarter moon the shoreline curled
Upon the neck of the ancient world.⁷

And at other times when such objects are in motion, by attributing to them human feelings and actions the poet supplies the sense of movement and vitality:

The blessed fog --
Ever before this day the enemy,
Leagued with the quicksands and the breakers.
Now mercifully masking the periscope lenses,
Smearing the hair-lines of the bomb-sights,
Hiding the flushed coveys.⁸

Under the waves the blood is sluggard,
And has the same temperature as that of the sea.⁹

Skylines unknown to maps broke from the mists,
And there was laughter on the seas.¹⁰

Its lateral motion on the Davis Strait
Was casual and indeterminate.¹¹

5 E.J. Pratt, "The Baritone", p.26.

6 Ibid., "The Ground Swell", p.200.

7 Ibid., "The Great Feud", p.256.

8 Ibid., "Dunkirk", p.10.

9 Ibid., "Silences", p.18.

10 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.36.

11 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.99.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

45

This "giving of life to lifeless things" as Aristotle puts it, is, it may be said, the ordinary method of poetry; but not every poet has the gift of making such constant and varied use of the technique as has Edwin John Pratt, who seems to be able, with perfect ease, to instill every wave with the power and the potentiality that only movement and action can sustain:

The waves

Cast forth their monstrous births which with grey fang
Appeared upon the leeward side, ran fast
 Along the broken crests, then coiled and sprang
 For the boat, impatient of its slow descent
 Into their own inviolate element.¹²

The image of movement in the foregoing stanza is sustained as well as conscious and potent. Lethargy, langour and lassitude are obliterated and the mighty strength of torrent and current, of billow and wave, is made known.

Pratt's love of movement is to be seen not only in the direct images which he takes from motion itself, but also in its relation to the interplay of colour and shadow and light and darkness. These make their strongest appeal to the poet because of their coming and going, their contrast, their interchange of place and time, as well as their differences in degree and in manner:

A slight rift revealed
 A spatter of light above the running seas.¹³

¹² E.J. Pratt, "The Roosevelt and The Antinoe", p.148.

¹³ E.J. Pratt, "The Roosevelt and The Antinoe", p.159.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

46

Turn ye your gaze, a moment, for
Beyond the plain over the height
Of the palm trees where the white
Foam-line breaks upon the bar.
There under the blue stretch of sea,
Living in darkness out of sight
Skulks our ancient enemy.¹⁴

And again in the following stanza there is a more sharply etched example of colour-change that makes the image stand out in clear relief:

No one had seen this young man go,
Or watched his plunge,
To save another whom he did not know.
Men only guessed the grimness of the struggle,
The body-tug, the valour of the deed,
For both were wrapped in the same green
winding-sheet
And blood-red was the colour of the weed
That lay around their feet.¹⁵

Darkness and light although all-encompassing and even all-enshrouding glean their main potency from their appearance and disappearance -- a rhythm in their time and place. It is as though the poet wished to state that what is static may be sterile.

A giant hand
Had wrought it cruciform,
And placed deep shadows on the sunken panels,
Then in ironic jest,
Had carved out the crest
Of death upon the lintel.¹⁶

14 E.J. Pratt, "The Great Feud", p.265.

15 Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.216.

16 Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.212.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

47

Swift, delicate and darting action or sometimes a modulated and measured beat is denoted by the use of particular words in association with the sea:

running (p.159);	unfolding (p.104);	calling (p.137);
ringing (p.184);	waiting (p.126);	murmuring (p.104);
ripping (p.152);	shouldering (p.26);	traversing (p.1);
merging (p.117);	soothing (p.11);	gliding (p.2);
streaming (p.153);	singing (p.184);	wallowing (p.22);
falling (p.126);	lifting (p.151);	treading (p.46);
allaying (p.11);	rising (p.126);	hiding (p.44);
heaving (p.198);	lapping (p.122);	biding (p.44);
washing (p.143);	tossing (p.152);	holding (p.42);
swirling (p.124);		

17

A great deal of Pratt's particular art, art which he has inherited from the great poets of a former age, consists in the rapid and constant substitutions of effect, especially as regards life and movement; one class of things being drawn upon to furnish an impression that is required for another.

This is the method of the greater number of his most distinctive and characteristic images, images which bear upon them the hall mark of greatness.

17 E.J. Pratt, Collected Poems, or, Behind the Log.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

48

Out from the belfries of the town there swung
 Great notes that held the winds and the pagan roll
 Of open seas within their measured toll,
 Only the bells' slow ocean tones, that rose
 And hushed upon the air, knew how to tongue
 That Iliad of Death upon the floes.¹⁸

Herein we find the epic of the sea, in which death is the great action to which lesser actions are but preludes, and the entire story is told in the tolling of bells, which ring out their "slow ocean tones" and in a cadence of triumphant sorrow the Iliad is sung.

The waves beat up and swiftly spun
 A silver web at every stride;
 He watched their long, thin fingers run
 The letters back into the tide.¹⁹

In this little stanza Fate and the waves conspire. There is the relentlessness of their actions and the complete oblivion which will be the result of the erasing by those tireless fingers. The tide will swallow up its prey and leave no trace of its endeavor, even though the plunder be the casual tracery of a beloved name.

The substitution of animal instinct and the ferocity of animal movement is frequently displayed in the sea sagas of Pratt.

¹⁸ E.J. Pratt, "The Toll of the Bells", p.199.

¹⁹ Ibid., "The Flood-Tide", p.188.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

49

Lion-hunger, tiger-leap!
 The waves are bred no other way;
 It was their way when the Norseman came,
 It was the same in Cabot's day.²⁰

The unremitting and pitiless traffic of the tides can be most adequately expressed with animal-comparison.

In the case of Pratt's poetry it is always the action, rather than the deed which results therefrom, that captivates the poet, and in which he centres his poetic art. The heroic action at Dunkirk is glorious just because:

The proffered sword disclaimed by the victor,
 The high salute at the burial of the foe
 Wrapped in the folds of his flag,
 The wreath from the skies,
 Were far romantic memories.²¹

"Brebeuf and His Brethren" has epic strength illustrated in the vivid imagery and symbolism and in movements and actions which recall former days. Deeds are founded upon enterprise, venture, endeavor, and daring that could not be portrayed except by motion:

The family name was known to chivalry --
 In the Crusades; at Hastings; through the blood
 Of the English Howards; called out on the rungs
 Of the siege ladders; at the castle breaches;
 Proclaimed by heralds at the lists, and heard
 In Council halls.²²

The examples which have been quoted may be considered as

²⁰ E.J. Pratt, "The Way of Cape Race", p.188.

²¹ Ibid., "Dunkirk", p.9.

²² Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.39.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

50

representative of the poetic art with its illustrative movements that are being constantly employed by Pratt. The poet even speaks of death not as static reality but as resulting from the freakish movement of molecules. He thus causes the mind to focus on the motion:

Fresh water and fresh air, could by a shift
Sudden and freakish in the molecules
Be transubstantiated into death.²³

A deed of unsurpassed valour becomes an obituary written by moving flames. At another time an abandoned convoy ship was sinking when someone reported that the codes had not been destroyed. A life must be sacrificed for the safety of the nation. With a verb of motion the entire story is told:

As there was a chance
That the steamer might not sink -----
Kenagami was ordered to embark an officer,
Return him to the listed deck to find
And sink the weighted papers -- WHICH WAS DONE.²⁴

Professor Spurgeon devotes a whole chapter to the predominance of movement in the Shakespearian imagery. She tells us:

Indeed, it would seem as if a predominating movement, which informs and vitalizes every passage, is in part the secret of many of Shakespeare's magical effects.²⁵

Wordsworth, also, instinctively and spontaneously found in motion the very essence of life itself; and in this finding he formulated for us what is perhaps his highest poetic

²³ E.J. Pratt, "Behind the Log", p.24.

²⁴ Ibid., "Behind the Log", p.27.

²⁵ Caroline Spurgeon, op.cit., p.55.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

51

principle: "A motion and a spirit that impels/all thinking things, all objects of all thought,/ and rolls through all things."²⁶

In company with these and other eminent poets, Pratt is devoted to the power of movement, and he couples with this movement the energetic strength of his sea imagery.

The Predominating Movement

It is not sufficient to note that movement and action in general are representative of Pratt's technique -- his glory in the "life of things". There is, moreover, a certain predominating movement that conforms to the entire Pratt-philosophy of life; it is the image of victory, the successive pictures of dawn triumphing over dusk, of light succeeding night, of the mighty sea combating with the wind and the elements. Although at times the outcome seems doubtful and the two wrestlers fight abreast, yet inevitably a "higher power triumphs"; nature makes obeisance to the God of nature. This predominating movement informs and vitalizes the whole poetic pattern.

Varied are the methods that Pratt adopts to express his dawn-triumphant imagery. In describing the depth and vastness of the ocean the poet says:

²⁶ Helen Darbishire, article on "Wordsworth's Prelude" in The Nineteenth Century, issue of May, 1926.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

52

The unvocal sea ----- where darkness spills
 Its wash on the threshold of light.²⁷

After the almost impenetrable gloom and the almost inevitable
 doom of the Dunkirk beach, with its overshadowing doubt and
 despair, the Channel mists lift;

And with it the calm on the Channel,
 The power that drew the teeth from the storm,
 The peace that passed understanding.²⁸

In narrating the story of the capture of Jogues which in
 reality ends in a sequel of suffering, the "dawn-image"
 brings with it the ray of light, a light both physical and
 spiritual, by the introduction of the Nativity thought:

The voyage closed
 At Falmouth where, robbed by a pirate gang,
 He wandered destitute until picked up
 By a French crew who offered him tramp fare.
 He landed on the shore of Brittany
 On Christmas Eve.²⁹

In a more elaborate and long drawn out figure we are shown
 the storm that buffeted and benighted the Antinoe, at length
 succeeded by dawn and victory as the Roosevelt-name is
 inscribed in "crimson coronation".

Through a rift of sky
 A level shaft, the first one for a week,
 Quivered on the edge of a cloud, then struck
 A line of foam, making for the grey peak
 Of a kingpost, then to the waterline from truck,

27 E.J. Pratt, "Silences", p.19.

28 Ibid., "Dunkirk", p.11.

29 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.75.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

53

Till from the starboard taffrail up the span
 Of the hull, it reached the lettering where it ran
 In crimson coronation of her name,
 As if a god might thus salute the deed.³⁰

Again in the following brief tribute to Newfoundland the
 dawn-image with its hope and promise holds all that the
 poet can wish for his beloved homeland:

The story is told
 Of human veins and pulses,
 Of eternal pathways of fire,
 Of dreams that survive the night,
 Of doors left ajar in storms.³¹

It is because, for Pratt, dreams always survive the night,
 and the flame of hope is never completely extinguished, that
 the dawn-image becomes a favourite in almost every poem. The
 struggle may persist, the shadow may fall, and the courage may
 ebb, but always,

The trails ----- sank
 Under fern and briar and fungus,
 There in due time to blossom
 Into the highways that lead to the crest of the hill.³²

The power of this victory is seen in "Although the frugal
 game denies the goal --- yet there will be one flaming
 pennant from the sun."³³ In another poem we are told that
 "One day/ this world of ours will tire of all its burdens --
 and perish/ But I know one whose heart possesses a love that

³⁰ E.J. Pratt, "The Roosevelt and The Antinoe", p.161.

³¹ Ibid., "Newfoundland", p.167.

³² Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.94.

³³ Ibid., "The Lost Cause", p.26.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

54

won't expire."³⁴ Perhaps it is the marvellous courage of the poet that causes him to discern and to express in vivid imagery the seeming death or sterility that is always overcome by life and fertility: "November weaves a sense of desolation --- but April lures the crocus through the snow!"³⁵ It is this fact literally and figuratively expressed and believed that Pratt portrays for the reader in his imagery. His magic of poetic strength is found in images like this:

To gather flowers from the Arctic snows,
 To make a desert blossom with a rose,

 To distil a rapture from a moan,
 And over-ride the sternest natural law
 By straight appeal to a more sovereign throne.³⁶

Colour

With most people the strongest element of visual appeal is generally that of colour. In this respect Pratt does not disappoint the reader. It is clear that the poet loves the gleam and glitter, the flash and sparkle of light, and also that he is deeply interested in colour, not chiefly for its colour value, as an artist might be, but rather for the purpose it serves to convey a deeper thought.

³⁴ E.J. Pratt, "Wither?" p.27.

³⁵ Ibid., "A November Landscape", p.36.

³⁶ Ibid., "Magic", p.36.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

55

In the sea imagery the colour white brings with it, besides its ordinary meaning of virtue and purity, the additional connotation of joy. White is a happy colour; it speaks of forging ahead, of cresting the waves, of gaining the palm. Silver is closely allied with white in its interpretation by this author, to proclaim that danger is past and security within sight. Of the Roosevelt Pratt says:

The fifth morning found her
With high gales still, and white seas all around her.³⁷

And then lest the reader does not grasp the full significance and import of the situation, the poet emphasizes the happy note:

The notes came from a silver throat aglow
With life and triumph.³⁸

To tell of a happy release from the cares of the world:

Along the shore,
And evermore

The white-foam-bells
Of the North Sea ringing.³⁹

To stress the mighty power of the sea and the magnificent rescue work of the Roosevelt, the poet states:

37 E.J. Pratt, "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.1.

38 Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.161.

39 Ibid., "On the Shore", p.184.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

56

Then following the omen of a lull,
 The advent of a wave which like a wall
 Crashed down in volleys flush against the hull,
 Lifting its white and shafted spume to fall
 Across the higher decks.⁴⁰

White is not the colour that Pratt uses the most profusely in the sea imagery --- nor is the sea itself the canvas upon which he most frequently spreads his colours, but the colour white is found there, and at each appearance it is fraught with meaning. The iceberg in triumphant procession is joined by "a host of white flotillas gathering in its wake."⁴¹ When the ocean is cool and clear and the horizon flawless for the Titanic, we are told that:

A double foam line ran
 Diverging from the beam to join the edge
 Of the stern wake like a white unfolding fan.⁴²

When safety for the Dunkirk forces is assured, then we are told:

The flotillas of ships were met by flotillas of gulls
 Whiter than cliffs of Foreland.⁴³

For Pratt white is a quiet colour, the colour that betokens that "all is well", but he also in his descriptions of the sea makes vivid use of warm red, burnished gold and amber, green and grey, and of course the striking contrasts of

40 E.J. Pratt, "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.151.

41 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.99.

42 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.104.

43 Ibid., "Dunkirk", p.11.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

57

black and white.

In the following image the sea becomes a canvas where-
upon the sun as an artist displays his gorgeous tints:

We stood on the deck as the morning outrolled
On the fields its tissues of orange and gold.
And lit up the ice to the north in the sharp
Clear air.⁴⁴

When the Roosevelt has accomplished her deed of rescue, the
powers of earth and air, and even the gods inscribe her name
in crimson script:

A level shaft of light --- struck a line of foam
Where it ran in crimson coronation, of her name.
As if a god might thus salute the deed,
And ratify the venture with the screed
Of an aurora milled in solar flame.⁴⁵

The meeting and mingling of sunlight and water is often
described by Pratt in terms of rainbow tints:

Beyond the port in roll and leap and curl,
In the rich hues of sunlight on the spray,
And in the march of tides--swept down the bay
The pageant of the morning.⁴⁶

In another sun-and-sea image the rainbow tints are even more
vivid:

Over his back the running seas
Cascaded, while the morning sun
Rising in gold and beryl, spun
Over the cachalot's streaming gloss,
And from the foam, a fiery floss
Of multitudinous fashionings.⁴⁷

44 E.J. Pratt, "The Ice-Floes", p.195.

45 Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.161.

46 Ibid., "The Ritual", p.202.

47 Ibid., "The Cachalot", p.173.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

58

Apparently Pratt is especially sensitive to emptiness and inactivity; throughout his poetry the colour grey speaks of loss of hope and of that which is sterile, and it is used as contrast in the sea imagery. When the Titanic is submerged and the iceberg floats on in victory, the hopeless note creeps in, and this time it is charged with sinister import:

And out there in the starlight, with no trace
Upon it of its deed, but with the last wave
From the Titanic fretting at its base,

The grey shape with the palaeolithic face
Was still the master of the longitudes.⁴⁸

When after a hundred hours of bitterest struggle hope seemed to be draining from the hearts of the bravest aboard the Antinoe, Pratt again makes use of the grey of monotony, the grey of routine, and this time the very sameness carries with it the hint and the tint of danger and dread:

And in that hundred hours eternity
Had ticked its lazy seconds on the sea,

The same rotation on the deck -- the grey
Sterility of hope with each life-boat gone.⁴⁹

In another little poem grey is found in the sea imagery to denote the futility of the spent waves:

But she had written where the tide
Could never its grey waters fling;
She watched the longest wave subside
Ere it could touch the lettering.⁵⁰

48 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.128.

49 Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.155.

50 Ibid., "The Flood-Tide", p.189.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

59

The fruitless effort expended to recall the beloved, the voice that is overpowered by the noise of wind and wave is again noted by means of an image of grey:

He will not hear you call;
Only the night winds answer as they fall
Along the shore,
And evermore
Only the sea-shells
On the grey stones singing.⁵¹

The unknown admiral of an unknown ocean is questioned thus, concerning the realm of Eternity:

Do courage and honour receive
On the wastes of your realm, their fair name and title
As they do on our sea grey altars?⁵²

At times the colour grey not only denotes sterility and unconcern but also imminent danger as when the poet describes the enemy submarines:

Grey predatory fish had pedigreed
With tiger sharks and brought a speed and power
The sharks had never known.⁵³

The grey that tells of life's lengthened shadows has been used by many poets, Pratt also uses this image adding to what is conventional his own personal touch:

Day withdrew its crimsons
Causing grey to sift
Like ashes through your hands.⁵⁴

⁵¹ E.J. Pratt, "On the Shore", p.184.

⁵² Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.215.

⁵³ Ibid., "Behind the Log", p.3.

⁵⁴ Ibid., "The Lost Cause", p.26.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

60

And again we are given the grey of death foreshadowed:

A greyness as of chill December earth
Recording ninety winters on your face.⁵⁵

Or again when he speaks of the sea subdued by the temperature
to be a Pontiff asleep in death and clothed in grey vestments:

How like a Pontiff dost thou lie at last,
Robed at Death's high-unctioned hour
With these grey vestments that the storm
In the dread legacy of its power,
Around thy level form majestically has cast.⁵⁶

Crape has been used by the poet with the same emotional
significance as a colour, and perhaps even more highly
charged:

Clothed with crape the convoys journeyed on
Like mourners.⁵⁷

This same imagery tells of the dangers of night on the stormy
Atlantic during the war years:

Stirred by some dark sign within thy fearful hollows
Where night flings her crape of shadows
On a tossing line of jetsom.⁵⁸

Rarely, if ever, is the poet so caught up in the network of
his images that his poetry becomes completely divorced from
thought as if the imagery alone were the aim, rather his
interest in colour and light and sound is subordinate to his
message, or at least to the philosophical reflection latent

⁵⁵ E.J. Pratt, "Dreams" p.40.

⁵⁶ Ibid., "Sea Variations", p.472.

⁵⁷ Ibid., "Behind the Log", p.32.

⁵⁸ Ibid., "Sea Variations", p.473.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

61

in each poem. Very often the imagery is chosen to make the reader aware of the sadness which is inseparable from joy, or of the unsuspected affinities between contraries. There are, it must be admitted times when we may not insist upon visualizing every line of the poetry with literal exactitude, since the metaphor is not, pictorially beyond reproach, yet such trifling objections are swept away by the overpowering force of the image. This has been well accounted for by a student of imagery:

A skilful poet will employ colour imagery either to sharpen the outlines of what he is trying to depict or to evoke a set of responses heavily charged with emotion.⁵⁹

Some writers have maintained that all true poems grow organically from images, and that images are never to be used merely as a decoration for a theme already chosen. Goethe once stated:

One must allow images to form with all their associations before one criticises... the wise poet knows that only after permitting the images to pass to and fro, weaving what patterns they will, does he begin tentatively to fashion his poem and to move the sleeping images of things towards the light!⁶⁰

⁵⁹ John Press, The Fire and the Fountain, London: Oxford University Press, 1955, p.161.

⁶⁰ Goethe quoted by John Press, op.cit., p.162.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

62

Light and Darkness

As with most poets, light in the poetry of Pratt is a symbol of goodness and its recurring presence compensates for the twilight and dusk and darkness that sometimes completely invades an entire poem. Shadow and shade are never lacking, but for this poet their utility may sometimes be that of a back-drop against which light will shine the brighter. Contrast has more than one role to play, more than one office to fulfill. It is in demand to supply simply physical description; to suggest symbolic values; to delineate character; to underline a theme; or in a general way to illuminate the poet's meaning.

In this instance the darkness of the depths of the ocean contrives with silence to perpetrate some evil deed:

And now two hundred feet below
 She held her bearings towards her foe,
 While silence and the darkness flowed
 Along an un navigated road.⁶¹

In another image the darkness of night is completely vanquished by the brilliance thrown up from the sea, this light is very powerful even though the brightness be furnished by the artificial lights of the boat:

The sky was moonless but the sea flung back
 With greater brilliance half the zodiac.⁶²

61 E.J. Pratt, "The Submarine", p.33.

62 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.109.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

63

Pratt uses contrast in imagery to underline the stress and the tension which results from the relentlessness caused by Fate:

Full noon and midnight by a weird design
Both met and parted at the median line.⁶³

From the mere physical description in the contrast between the darkness of the smoke and the brightness of the fire evolves the danger that the concluding words of the image convey in the word "stabs" which is not used haphazardly but is fraught with meaning:

In front of the crew were the rolling mountains of smoke
Spilling fire from their Vesuvian rims;
The swaying fringes from the Borealis blue;
The crimson stabs through the curtains.⁶⁴

The submarine cannot accomplish its deed of death in the sunlight. The animal imagery that accompanies the darkness image reveals to the reader that the poet is here concerned with more than technical accuracy:

The submarine, like a deep-sea shark,
Went under cover, away from the light
And limn of the sunset, from the sight
Of the stars, to a native lair as dark
As a kraken's grave.⁶⁵

When death and danger are inevitable and the doom of the Titanic is proclaimed as a certain fact, then the poet uses the darkness of the tomb as an image:

63 E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.117.

64 Ibid., "Dunkirk", p.7.

65 Ibid., "The Submarine", p.36.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

64

The fidley leading from the boiler room
Lay like a tortuous exit from a tomb.⁶⁶

Contrast is again employed and the brightness-darkness image is used to portray false security. Either the one or the other would have brought certainty, but a mingling of both serves to stress deception:

The miracle of day displacing night
Had worked its fascination to beguile
Direction of the hours, and cheat the sight.⁶⁷

Almost complete despair and dejection is conveyed in the darkness imagery that the poet employs here to underline the great distress of the Antinoe and the futile efforts of the gallant Roosevelt.

The sea itself was gone save when it hurled
The body of a wave across the bow;
Soon even this was lost to the bridge, and now
Behind the weather-cloth it seemed the world
Was carried with the last gust to the void.⁶⁸

The power of light in this image effectively contrasts with the powerlessness of night:

Legions
Unnumbered moving at the rate of light,
Pushed out beyond all navigated regions;
Exploring every cranny of the night,
Reaching out through the dusky corridors
Above the sea to uninhabited shores.⁶⁹

66 E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.122.

67 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.125.

68 Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.138.

69 Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.139.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

65

There is a spiritual import in the following imagery of contrast on the sea. The priest in prayer faces the black waste of waters but a flickering light is flashed back and this gleam, feeble though it be, becomes meaningful and hopeful:

Lifting up a crucifix, he faced
The starboard quarter, looking down the waste
Of waters casting back the flickering light
Of the steamer.⁷⁰

When the poet wishes to imply that danger lies beyond the threshold of the dawn, and that it will threaten before another nightfall, he employs the contrast of mist and light:

Over the bulwarks again we were gone,
With the first faint streaks of a misty dawn.⁷¹

And then as the poem progresses and the danger becomes more evident, and death seems to be a thing almost tangible, the contrast imagery is used once more:

And we felt in our hearts that the night had swallowed
All signals, the whistle, the flare, and the smoke
To the south.⁷²

In this imagery darkness, doubt and dismay surge in with the drifts of sand and the burial turf:

And at this darkest moment, as I dreamed,
The world with its dead weight of burdens seemed
To pause before the door, in drifts of sand,
And catacombs of rock and burial turf.

And all the music left upon the waters
Lay in the gray rotation of the surf.⁷³

⁷⁰ E.J. Pratt, "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.151.

⁷¹ Ibid., "The Ice-Floes", p.196.

⁷² Ibid., "The Ice-Floes", pp.197-198.

⁷³ Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.218.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

66

Technical accuracy is adhered to in the following imagery but it does not mar the contrast of light bringing hope and darkness conveying defeat:

Aboard the ship, whatever hope of dawn
 Gleamed from the Carpathia's riding light was gone,
 For every knot was matched by each degree
 Of list. The stern was lifted bodily
 When the bow had sunk three hundred feet, and set
 Against the horizon stars in silhouette
 Were the blade curves of the screws, the hump of the
 rudder.⁷⁴

The finale of defeat is told not in the actual sinking of the ship but in the extinguishing of the brilliant lights and then the substitution of utter darkness:

The angle had increased,
 From eighty on to ninety when the rows
 Of deck and port-hole lights went out, flashed back
 A brilliant second and again went black.⁷⁵

Very often Pratt conveys a flickering of hope by a feeble or wavering glimmer of light:

Evening again, and in its power to smite
 The snowy cordon with its warning light,
 The Cape's revolving beacon was as sick
 As the guttering limit of a candle wick.⁷⁶

Throughout this exposition of the imagery of light and darkness it may be noted that the images drawn from light represent all good things, enlightenment of every kind, both mental and spiritual: truth, virtue, knowledge, understanding, reason and even God. It is not surprising then that the light

⁷⁴ E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.127.

⁷⁵ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.127.

⁷⁶ Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.137.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

67

images are unusually tinged with emotion; and because this is so, they will be dealt with in more detail in a further chapter.

Let it be once more repeated that although Pratt gives us definite colours, as well as colour groups, and vivid contrast, the reader has always the impression that the poet is interested in tone, character, and emotion rather than in the colour itself.

Aural Imagery of the Sea

The aural imagery of the sea makes a keen impression upon Pratt. The boom and roar of reef, and crest, and billow and wave bring to his sensitive imagination either the exultation of victory or the agony of defeat. To him the tides have been harbingers of joy as well as the bearers of sad tidings:

Of twenty thousand seals that were killed
To help to lower the price of bread;
Of the muffled beat ... of a drum ... that filled
A nave ... at our count of sixty dead.⁷⁷

The sounds range from loud to soft, from joyous to poignant. There is scarcely a single poem that does not have some appeal to the sense of sound.

Among the sound effects of the sea musical notes have a prominent place:

⁷⁷ E.J. Pratt, "The Ice-Floes", p.198.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

68

Only the sea-shells
 On the gray stones singing,
 And the white foam-bells
 Of the North Shore ringing.⁷⁸

This musical imagery frequently has an undertone of sadness:

The waves still ring the knell
 Of ships that pass at night,
 Of dreadnought and of cockle-shell;
 They do not heed the light,
 The fog-horn and the bell.⁷⁹

In image after image we find that the waves are bells, foam-bells that lustily peal forth their message of triumph, or toll in solemn tones the dirge of death:

Only the bells slow ocean tones, that rose
 And hushed upon the air, knew how to tongue
 That Iliad of Death upon the floes.⁸⁰

In another image the poet expresses the lingering music in waves that have spent their power and their force and now are weary of their very restlessness:

And all the music left upon its waters
 Lay in the gray rotation of its surf,
 With calls of seamen in great weariness
 At their unanswered signals of distress.⁸¹

Herein the "gray rotation"⁸² and the "unanswered signals"⁸³ join in a subdued and tired chorus to tell the apparently

⁷⁸ E.J. Pratt, "On the Shore", p.184.

⁷⁹ Ibid., "The Way of Cape Race", p.188.

⁸⁰ Ibid., "Toll of the Bells", p.199.

⁸¹ Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.218.

⁸² Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.218.

⁸³ Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.218.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

69

unconcerned world of the plight of "this darkest moment".⁸⁴

Pratt's great love for the sea is evident in the case in which he wishes to pay tribute to the winds; he can find no words more eloquent than these which laud the music of the waves:

Here the winds blow,
And here they die,
Not with that wild, exotic rage
That vainly sweeps untrodden shores,
But with familiar breath

They call with the silver fifes of the sea,
They are one with the tides of the heart.⁸⁵

At other times the poet stresses the martial music, as if the very waves were drawn up in marching formation and prepared for attack:

A sound was heard, now like the beat
Of tides under the drive of winds,
Now like the swift deck-tread of feet,
Steadying to a drum
Which marshalled them to quarters.⁸⁶

It is strength that seems to be underscored in this magnificent image that emerges from silence into sound, to teach us the "sea's strong voice", in this beloved land, where waters ebb and flow as though they were the pulse of the nation:

Here the tides flow,
And here they ebb;
Not with the dull, unsinewed tread of waters
Held under bonds to move
Around unpeopled shores.

⁸⁴ E.J. Pratt, "The Iron Door", p.218.

⁸⁵ Ibid., "Newfoundland", p.166.

⁸⁶ Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.219.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

70

But with the lusty stroke of life
 Pounding at stubborn gates,
 That they might run
 Within the sluices of men's hearts,
 Leap under throb of pulse and nerve
 And teach the sea's strong voice
 To learn the harmonies of new floods.⁸⁷

Again the musical note comes in when the rescue of the
 "Antinoe" has been accomplished, and the "running seas"⁸⁸
 shorten their madeand angry pace:

A shorter blast,
 A mimic of halloo, followed by fast
 Merry little runs in tremolo,
 And then again with open throat the long
 Insistent call with pauses, trills and strong
 Leaping crescendos.⁸⁹

The joy of rescue is echoed here, but in another case when
 the ship sinks the music of ritual is just as true and firm:

She left her name under revolted skies,

 Amidst the grounded gutturals of the reef,
 And with the grind of timbers on the sides
 Of cliffs resounding with the march of tides.⁹⁰

Even the multitudinous clashes of the great billows of the
 Atlantic, that toss in ocean fury, are blended for this poet
 in orchestral symphony:

And every hour in the wireless room,
 The shards of cries as by an incantation
 Were joined to an Atlantic orchestration.⁹¹

⁸⁷ E.J. Pratt, "Newfoundland", p.165.

⁸⁸ Ibid., "Newfoundland", p.159.

⁸⁹ Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.166.

⁹⁰ Ibid., "The Ritual", p.202.

⁹¹ Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.152.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

71

The aural images of the sea are not always musical and vital; they do not always put verve and energy of action into the spectators; they are not always soothing and resigned to the fate of ocean tragedy. The poet had witnessed the sea, his sea, in its varied moods, now sullen, now angry, now almost penitent, and again almost re-awakened to new life and action after apparent listlessness, and in imagery that is vivid he is able to transcribe each and every mood: the water like a rumble of thunder (p.32); the clang of the North Sea (p.26); the hammer of the sea(p.144); the grunt of the Mediterranean (p.26); through clash of tide and gale (p.99); with deep already calling unto deep (p.137); to feed the tumult of the upper waves (p.127); undecoded human cries below the keels to the Atlantic crypts (p.140); the thunder of the surf (p.232); the roar of the reefs (p.144); ocean's battering (p.182).⁹² There are times when the sound of the waves, without any other impulse, seems to impart a vitality to the waters that is almost human:

The international prelude which the sea
Beats out in storm from human veins to express
The fever pulses of its own distress.⁹³

Danger and disaster are spelled out in the sensuous element of sound as the reader becomes aware of the hurling cascades:

⁹² E.J. Pratt, Collected Poems.

⁹³ Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antioch", p.141.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

72

The liner's knots
 Followed by danger when the sea would turn
 And test the rivets from the stem to stern,
 With longitudinal blows, hurling cascades
 Upon the bow, till with a burial wave
 The engines instantly would stop to save
 The tail-shaft from the racing of the blades.⁹⁴

In keeping with the theme of heroism of the poem Pratt
 employs imagery of strategic preparation to tell of sailors
 who with unbaffled energy and unfailing courage face the
 terror of the waves and meet the great assault:

A wave upon the weather side
 Reached out and caught the last port life-boat; smashed
 It from the davits down the incline; crashed
 The forward wall of the wireless cabin; sheared
 It clean. Matching death with strategy
 The sailors took their chance with each spent sea.⁹⁵

This image of determination "to do and dare" is at another
 time almost equated with an image, just as revealing, of
 entire submission, when the pulses of the tides have been
 subdued and silenced:

A sound was heard, now like the beat
 Of tides under the drive of the winds.⁹⁶

The roar of the sea carries with it an enigma, for the un-
 known is beyond the surge, an unknown that can never be
 charted or sketched:

94 E.J. Pratt, "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe," p.142.

95 Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.142.

96 Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.142.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

73

As the crag took on the heaving motion
 Of the fog, and the roar beat in his ear
 Of surge afar off --- he hallooed,
 The unknown admiral of the unknown ocean.⁹⁷

In this present instance the sea is employed in allegory, but no less representative is the sea in actuality -- for indeed it was the sea of reality that gave the breath of life to the allegorical form. The mounting waves in another image erect a wall, build a bastion, to momentarily protect the battered ship, which later they will not hesitate to crush. The imagery seems to portray the eagerness of the waves to save the prey from the winds only to capture it for themselves:

Was she beyond that scurrying barricade
 To come back on a wave-lift, as a score
 Of doubtful moments she had done before
 When gusts had passed?⁹⁸

Personification is frequently employed, the power of the waves is increased by bequeathing to them momentarily the aptitudes, the habits, and even the senses of human beings or of animals. In the description of the Roosevelt at the mercy of the sea the poet tells of Captain Fried's decision to pour fuel upon the waves to assuage their fury:

To avoid the crisis when a wave should toss
 Her like a dinghy on the smaller ship.⁹⁹

In the personifications where evil or injury hold sway the

⁹⁷ E.J. Pratt, "The Iron Door", p.214.

⁹⁸ Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.144.

⁹⁹ Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.146.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

74

poetic imagery is noticably inclined to animal rather than to human traits:

Below, like creatures of a fabled past,
From their deep hidings in unlit caves,
The long processions of great-bellied waves
Cast forth their monstrous births which with gray fang
Appeared upon the leeward side, ran fast
Along the broken crests, then coiled and sprang.¹⁰⁰

During the burial ceremonial in imagery the waves are unbelievers who scoff in derision of the empty comfort that the bereaved seek in dogma and doctrine:

A wild antiphonal
Of shriek and whistle from the shrouds broke through
Blending with thuds as though some throat had laughed
In thunder down the ventilating shaft.¹⁰¹

In martial or regimental imagery the wave is sometimes the sacked and other times the besieged town, the ramparts of which collapse in the crash and din of battle:

The advent of a wave which like a wall
Crashed down in volleys flush against the hull
Lifting its white and shafted spume to fall
Across the higher decks.¹⁰²

As the hours advance (one hundred hours had passed)¹⁰³ and the storm is steadily spending its strength the fierce impact of the ocean becomes less and correspondingly mitigated is the harsh boom of the waters; the author expresses this muted regression in the imagery of trampled pampas during an unexpected stampede:

¹⁰⁰ E.J. Pratt, "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.148.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.150.

¹⁰² Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.151.

¹⁰³ Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.154.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

75

When the last remnant of the sky was blown
 Out, with the ocean like a pampas stirred
 To the confusion of a great stampede --
 -----and the Antinoe a thrown
 Spent rider overtaken by a herd.¹⁰⁴

The poet's imagery of the wash of waves against the banks of
 Newfoundland brings in sounds that are varied, but there is
 no discordant note, no jarring sound:

Here the tides flow,
 And here they ebb;
 Not with the dull unsinewed tread of waters.

But with a lusty stroke of life
 Pounding at stubborn gates,
 That they might run
 Within the sluices of men's hearts
 Leap under throb of pulse and nerve
 And teach the seas Strong voice
 To learn the harmonies of new floods,
 The peal of cataract,
 And the soft wash of currents
 Against resilient banks.¹⁰⁵

By personification Pratt gives the combat of winds and waves:

Here the crags
 Meet with winds and tides --
 And spill the thunder of insentient seas.¹⁰⁶

In the next image there is a sympathetic power and a feeling
 of tenderness imparted by the poet to the calmed waters lest
 in rudeness of touch they crush sea vegetation:

The upper movement of the seas
 Across the reefs could not be heard;
 The nether tides but faintly stirred
 Sea-nettles and anemones.¹⁰⁷

104 E.J. Pratt, "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.152.

105 Ibid., "Newfoundland", p.165.

106 Ibid., "Newfoundland", p.166.

107 Ibid., "The Cachalot", p.170.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

76

Sound imagery throughout the poetry of Edwin John Pratt is of functional value. No single instance has been found where sound is employed merely for the purposes of decoration or elaboration of theme. With skilful artistry of sound the poet is able to portray the struggle and the strife; the glory and the triumph of the sea.

To sum up we may say that the poet was at all times keenly sensitive to the sounds of the sea, for him these sounds range through the scale of softest musical notes (p.218) through the martial notes that prelude war (p.99) the thunder of the surf (p.137) as well as the roar of the reef (p.144) even the inarticulate grunt of the beast (p.26) and the human note of pain that is sorrow drenched and slow (p.140).¹⁰⁸ So many varied and deciphered tones would seem to indicate the supreme place of sound in this poet's imagery but a more careful study reveals that silence is even more important; it forms the backdrop upon which sound may be studied. Also, there are certain things that there can be no question of -- that Pratt himself fears and hates, and one of these is the disruption of social order. The frame of human society -- the law that binds man to man -- seems to Pratt to have a mystical significance, to be one with a higher law, and to partake of the same nature as the mysterious agency by which the order on the heavens, the stars, planets, and the sun itself is

¹⁰⁸ E.J. Pratt, Collected Poems.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

77

determined. Professor Caroline Spurgeon has declared:

War -- contumelious, beastly, man-brained war --- was surely disliked by Shakespeare himself, and it is worth noting that the action of war is clearly associated in his mind chiefly with noise, whether he wants to convey dislike of it, or delight in it on the part of his characters."¹⁰⁹

The writer of this thesis has found that the same statement may be made concerning Pratt. A critic has said of Pratt, "He has never ventured into politics; real or alleged assaults upon freedom by provincial or national leaders have not heated him to poetical intervention".¹¹⁰ Such is true but the same critic has concluded his article by stating that the poet was deeply concerned when human liberty was threatened, many of his poems show this concern, this fear, this hatred of war and the weapons of war. For Pratt sound and especially raucous noise is associated with upheaval, for this reason it is in silence that the poet reposes his most potent images. Silence begets his greatest imaginative pictures. Just as Prospero invoked the aid of "heavenly music" to resolve discords:

Which pierces so, that it assaults
Mercy itself, and frees all faults.¹¹¹

In like manner does Pratt resolve discord, and restore harmony by silence. His attitude toward muted sounds or complete

¹⁰⁹ Caroline Spurgeon, op.cit., p.76.

¹¹⁰ Carl F. Klinck, p.34.

¹¹¹ Shakespeare, "The Tempest", p.314.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

78

stillness throughout the poetry is worthy of note. It is as though the most perfect earthly setting he can conceive is to be found during the moments when the strife is spent, in the aftermath of the struggle, in that fraction of time or space when the soul is liberated from the trivialities that jar and war, that seek recognition by noisy means, and instead finds itself, finds perfect peace in silence. In the sea poems this stillness and silence is a potent force, it is the hollow between the wave crests, the pause which makes the wave pulse possible.

In the Dunkirk poem after the author has gloriously painted the inheritance of Britain's children whose stamina may be traced through the illustrious line which records the deeds of Carcatacus, Boadicea, Alban, Alfred, Athelney, Edington, "great names which had been delivered unto them"¹¹² and a host of forebears not less eminent, whose names had once been bruited in all the land, but now are lost in the dust of the ages, after the poet has accorded the noble volunteers the applause they justly merit, he inserts an image that is priceless in estimating the real strength of the victors, this strength is other than human, the legitimate source has supernatural origin because:

Children of oaths and madrigals,
(They) stand hushed before the Canterbury tapers.¹¹³

¹¹² E.J. Pratt, "Dunkirk", p.2.

¹¹³ Ibid., "Dunkirk", p.3.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

79

Again in the same poem the reader by imagery is assured that the war of machines and the clamour of earth is of far less value than the silent victories gained by:

Stuff of the world's sagas in the heavens!
 Spitfires were chasing Heinkels, one to twenty.
 The nation's debt unpaid, unpayable,
 Was climbing to its pyramid,
 As the Hurricanes took on the Messerschmitts.¹¹⁴

Even the musical note of the waves, which at all times was able to cast a spell of awe, and something akin to reverence, in the youth who was reared so near the Atlantic coast, and in the man who through busy days must find the time to travel in memory to childhood haunts, even this ceaseless note is most beloved because of its undertones:

And now the throbbing organ-prelude dwells
 On the eternal story of the sea;
 Following the undertone of the Litany
 Ends like a sobbing wave.¹¹⁵

It is the silence of the sea, and the calm after the storm, that conveys the full realization of the "saved at last" and the "God be with you" note that the Dunkirk heroism brings out. The fog that is ever the enemy of the sailing craft, the crafty antagonist who awaits Britain's seamen in ambush with death and delusion is now made a friend by silence.

¹¹⁴ E.J. Pratt, "Dunkirk", p.7.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., "The Toll of the Bells", p.199.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

80

The calm on the Channel,
 The power that drew the teeth from the storm,
 The peace that passed understanding,
 Soothing the surf, allaying the lop on the swell,
 Out of the range of the guns.¹¹⁶

When the poet wishes to portray the cosmic event of the coming of Death, he can find no more apt image than that of ocean-silence:

One night we heard his footfall -- one September night -
 In the outskirts of a village near the sea.
 There was a moment when the storm
 Delayed its fist, when the surf fell
 Like velvet on the rocks -- a moment only;
 The strangest lull we ever knew.¹¹⁷

The silence in the depths of the sea is even more pregnant of life than that which is experienced in the tossing and falling of the surf. An entire poem is devoted to this silence, the author by vivid image would have his reader know that the meaningful lull of the waves is positive and vital, as well as peaceful and eloquent, because its very stillness speaks of life's greatest events:

There is no silence upon the earth, or under the earth,
 Like the silence under the sea;
 No cries announcing birth,
 No sounds declaring death.¹¹⁸

The imagery of silence is continued throughout the stanzas by the image strands of: silence in the worth and struggle for life;/ and all noiselessly;/ the dream is silent;/ the growl

¹¹⁶ E.J. Pratt, "Dunkirk", p.11.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., "Come Away, Death", p.17.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., "Silences", p.17.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

81

and cough and snarl are tokens of spendthrifts;/ the ultimate economy of rage;/ and finally all these strands are gathered up in one concluding image:¹¹⁹

Back to the unvocal sea
And down deep where the darkness spills its wash
On the threshold of light,
Where the lids never close upon the eyes,
Where the inhabitants slay in silence,
And are as silently slain.¹²⁰

All the actions that Pratt describes in his poetry "invite clinical examination which an alerted reader can give them".¹²¹ Therefore, the poet takes endless pains. Every detail is chosen just as carefully as his words. In the poem, "The Submarine", power and speed are made manifest by accurately described mechanism: electric switches; indicators; diving alarm-horns; oscillators; rudder-controls; and tubes and dials; pipes to force out battery gases;¹²² in fact a list of many machine-age gadgets is mentioned, in the reading of which efficiency is proclaimed and yet, the most powerful ally of the submarine is silence, and Pratt notes its endeavor thus:

She held her bearings toward the foe,
While silence and the darkness flowed
Along an un navigated road.¹²³

¹¹⁹ E.J. Pratt, "Silences", pp.17-19.

¹²⁰ Ibid., "Silences", p.19.

¹²¹ Carl F. Klinck, p.57.

¹²² E.J. Pratt, "The Submarine", pp.31-33.

¹²³ Ibid., "The Submarine", p.33.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

82

Again in the sea imagery of the silence of modern invention came the glad tidings of the 1926 rescue -- the gallant deed of the Roosevelt's crew:

For there had come through radiogram and wire
As high romance as any since the days
When Grecian sails and the triremes of Tyre
Hailed Carthaginian ships upon the bays
Of the Aegean.¹²⁴

The laurels were won by silent strenuous labour and the silent but sincere applause of fidelity to duty recognizes the deed as part of the day's work:

And she
Soon ready for completion of her run,
Swung out the Sound, with her day's work well done
And in an hour was on the Channel sea.¹²⁵

In an imagery of highway robbery the "Fog" becomes a victor and with "occult fingering"¹²⁶ overcomes its prey and seizes the booty, which in this case is the joy of life -- and eventually life itself:

It stole upon us like a foot-pad,
Somewhere out of the sea and air,
Silently it drew the song from our throats.¹²⁷

"The Iliad of Death"¹²⁸ for those whose frozen bodies are brought in from the sea is translated far more adequately and with more faithful rendering by notes of silence than by blast of trumpet or by toll of bell:

¹²⁴ E.J. Pratt, "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.162.

¹²⁵ Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.162.

¹²⁶ Ibid., "The Fog", p.186.

¹²⁷ Ibid., "The Fog", p.186.

¹²⁸ Ibid., "Toll of the Bells", p.199.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

83

But neither trumpet-blast, nor the hoarse din
 Of guns, nor the drooped signals from those mute
 Banners, could find a language to salute
 The frozen bodies that the ship brought in.
 To-day the vaunt is with the grave. Sorrow
 Has raked up Faith and burned it like a pile
 Of driftwood, scattering the ashes while
 Cathedral voices anthemed God's to-morrow.¹²⁹

The heavy rolling of the sea, the ground-swell with insistent
 note, but silent intent and progress at the midnight hour
 pierced all man-made barriers. The very silence it thus
 rudely shattered made its havoc the more terrible:

Then passed away as some dull pang that grew
 Out of the void before Eternity
 Had fashioned out an edge of human grief.¹³⁰

In "The Titanic" the image theme of silence is one
 of the most effective thematic devices that the poet employs
 to sustain emotion, underscore art, and provide suitable
 atmospheric conditions. This theme art of Pratt is dealt
 with in detail in the following section of this chapter, it
 is therefore, just mentioned here.

Images and Themes

The critic who attempts to consider the images of poems
 without considering their themes will find that his
 materials are at war with his endeavor. The activity
 is barely possible, though perverse, if one keeps no
 single particular poem in mind, but when it comes to
 actual images that are part of a structure the very
 act of grasping them means generally that we either

129 E.J. Pratt, "Toll of the Bells", p.199.

130 Ibid., "The Ground Swell", p.200.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

84

see, or mistake, a theme. No fact about imagery is more inconvenient, to one who writes of it. He cannot deal with what is important about the character of an image without having the whole poem on his hands, and he cannot state a theme accurately and significantly if he cuts off too closely those tendrils and trails of imagery which distinguish for us its precise nature, and which must therefore be allowed to cling to his statement either in fragments of his author's phraseology or, worse, his own.¹³¹

In this concise explanation Miss Rosemond Tuve sets forth the valid and self-evident reasons why any study of imagery must necessarily also be a study of theme. Therefore in the present study of the imagery of the sea poems of Pratt a sufficiently detailed study of theme will illustrate as well as substantiate the image claims that have already been made. Since images figure forth themes, the student of the image must keep the delicate relation of the mutual domination between them constantly in view.

All poems use figurative language, and all say what they mean through images, but only certain kinds organize themselves with exquisite economy around great central figurative conceptions.¹³²

"The Titanic" is a poem that has great thematic figures at its centre, whence lesser imagery springs. In an earlier chapter of the thesis (Chapter One) the claim was made that it is an error to think of imagery in terms of metaphor and simile solely; and that a valid investigation of the poetry

¹³¹ Rosemond Tuve, Images and Themes, in Five Poems by Milton, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1957, p.3.

¹³² Ibid., p.3.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

85

of Edwin John Pratt must necessarily note the interrelationships of language, idea, and imagery. Robin Skelton in The Poetic Pattern has endorsed the same statement that Miss Tuve has expressed:

A poem in patterning an experience, patterns only the essential core of the experience; the poem as experience has a coherence, definition, and unity, which is almost never found in our experience of any other part of life. It does, in fact, abstract from the experience, a gestalt. This gestalt is made up of the main elements of all the diseparate aspects or wholes contained in that experience, or is the central whole, isolated and seen clearly; the other elements have been repressed into the background.¹³³

A given experience can never recur in its original form, therefore in order to make the poetic pattern conform more closely to the prototype, the poet must have a submerged theme which runs through his entire creation. Metaphors (despite current critical opinions) are not always the all-important substrata of imagery, rather it is this image-trend or image-thread which will appear at dramatically significant moments, and will help to intensify, to enhance, to heighten, and to actualize the poetic conception that is potent. It appears at the same time transforms into poetical vision the outward elements of the situation.

These images are evoked through associations, or prepared for in advance; they have lingered in the poet's memory and every now and then arise from the subterranean

¹³³ Robin Skelton, op.cit., p.75.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

86

stream of imagination and creep into language. This imagery of association is in no poem of Pratt more clearly illustrated or more profoundly functional than in "The Titanic". The chief experiences that the author is intent upon portraying are the collision of the largest and possibly the fastest luxury liner of the time (1912) with the iceberg, the consequent sinking of the ship, and the tremendous loss of life. All this Pratt has faithfully portrayed with careful accuracy to the most minute details. Throughout the story of the catastrophe an undercurrent of fate runs like a sure but tangled thread, which can be glimpsed from time to time and although it may seem to disappear for long intervals it always comes back to the surface to re-affirm the one or the other of the fundamental ideas of the story.

The images whereby fate is indicated may be short and concise, and less "independent" than those which have hitherto been considered in this study -- but at the same time less general and digressive -- and far from being mere reference presentations this imagery gives the horizon of the individual occurrence a comprehensive perspective; it transforms human actions into mighty universal events. The elemental forces and the things of nature seem to grow beyond their actual content.

Unorganic and loose images may be inserted into a poem as something that could easily be cut out again without

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

87

impairing the structure. But this is not Pratt's peculiar technique. He, by means of delicate touches and hints, by vague and shadowy suggestions (often enough not understood at the moment) prepares us for something to come. He thus keeps the reader from wandering beyond the bounds of the thematic core.

Pratt's art in "The Titanic" consists in transporting the reader at the very outset into its atmosphere and problems without, however, actually disclosing its outcome. Imagery offers the best means of indirect and concealed statement for this art of foreshadowing coming events. It is pointless to try to explain by further generalizations this subtle and exceedingly intricate weaving together of metaphor and simile which is the key to the total poetic effect. All we can do is to draw from the fabric, one by one, the strands which compose it; and then to suggest in some manner the way in which they interact and by association and actual fusion reciprocally deepen their meaning:

Mind and will
In open test with time and steel had run
The first lap of a schedule and had won.¹³⁴

In the very first section of the poem the keynote of suspense is struck. There has been a content -- an unequal wager is casually mentioned, but just touched upon like a fantasy as

¹³⁴ E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.97.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

88

though it were not to be taken seriously. For indeed the succeeding verses, which suggest thoughtless pleasure and a holiday spirit, and seem to stress luxury and high-living, would refute and contradict that which is of greater moment. But the first few seconds have sufficed for Pratt to attain his aim, and for the reader to become alert.

A slight push of the rams as a switch set free
The triggers in the slots, and her proud claim
On size -- to be the first to reach the sea --
Was vindicated.¹³⁵

Once more we are given but a passing glimpse of the context-image; she was the first to reach the sea, but the reader is aware that mightily the builders contended to achieve this feat. In the first dozen lines of the poem we are told: she has run (line 3); she had won (line 4); she had surpassed (line 7); she had outclassed (line 9); and there was a rival effort (line 10);¹³⁶ and now in the word "vindicated" the author is once more underscoring the fact that "she had won!"¹³⁷ Yet, this time the image is completed with the seemingly insignificant phrase "her proud claim on size";¹³⁸ it is a veiled hint which discloses itself by pregnant comment in the succeeding lines:

¹³⁵ E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.98.

¹³⁶ Ibid., Collected Poems, "The Titanic".

¹³⁷ Ibid., "The Titanic". p.98.

¹³⁸ Ibid., "The Titanic". p.98.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

89

For whatever fears
 Stalked with her down the tallow of her slips
 Were smothered under by the harbour cheers,
 By flage strung to the halyards of the ships.¹³⁹

By now the author very clearly wishes his reader to know that besides the contest, the wish for supremacy, there were also fears, ghostly underlying fears, too vague to be classified or analyzed, but too imminent to be ignored. They "stalked" with the ship; but the bravado of luxury had been successful and now they were apparently "smothered-under". It is only that which we fear will betray us, the insidious evil which we cannot trust, that which has no tangible form or actual reality that we ever strive to "smother under".

The poet has, by careful touches of artistry in a single introductory section of the poem, been successful in launching the reader into the very element of tragedy, and the inconsequential image-threads of contest and fear, which might otherwise have been passed over without comment have now become the warp and woof of the pattern of fate.

By superlative and exaggerated claims the author lets us know of the insecurity of the builders and of the patrons:

An ocean lifeboat in herself -- so ran
 The architectural comment on her plan.¹⁴⁰

In this case the imagery is completely submerged in the

¹³⁹ E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.98.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.99.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

90

parenthetical aside, which stresses the doubt and speaks of the danger much more potently than open or direct statement could have done.

No wave could sweep those upper decks - - unthinkable!
 No storm could hurt that hull - - the papers said so.
 The perfect ship at last - - the first unsinkable,
 Proved in advance - - had not the folders read so.¹⁴¹

In four lines of the poem the reader is presented with eight distinct and different aspects of the same image-theme, and the impression of "something-is-going-to-happen" is too palpable to be overlooked: "sweep those decks", bespeaks a total elimination of anything that could stand in the way of the mighty ocean; the ironic implication of "unthinkable" cannot be ignored; in the next line "storm" and "hurt" both convey the same image. Usually a storm batters, but in this instance the word batter would be too obvious, it would not carry the insidious intensity of the word hurt; "the perfect ship", that which is finite cannot be perfect, the very phrasing makes the reader aware of flaws and imperfections; and this same thought is carried over in the next line in "proved in advance", again there is never genuine certitude in an advanced proof -- the experiment may be made but the same occurrence in a different matrix (as it needs must be upon second application) may disprove what was formerly thought to be infallible. And again the imagistic parenthetical

¹⁴¹ E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.99.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

91

clauses belie the truth they would proclaim: "the papers said so" and "the first unsinkable" and "had not the folders read so". On and on the tension is augmented as image after image underlines and reinforces the same insecurity.

In another section the poet would, by subtle turns, emphasize power and strength as though he were eager to rid the mind of any doubt that his imagery has previously offered: steel strength; fine adjustment; geared; responsive; absorb; buoyant; watertight; floating steady; wireless waves unstaled by use; to fold the heavens; caution was absurd; let the oceans roll; let the winds blow;¹⁴² yet, in the almost innocent assurance of these word-links lurks the threatening danger. Not only does suspense in this passage become positive fact, but by the clever wording of conviction, the poet introduces the act which the whole context has been foreshadowing:

In collision with iceberg or rock
Or passing ship she could survive the shock.¹⁴³

The tone is too bland, and the undertone of disaster too subtle to make the words ring true. A few lines farther on the reader comes upon "hubris", another image that has carried with it since the days of Aristotle the essence of tragedy. Finally, "the risk at Lloyds"¹⁴⁴ brings to a realistic climax.

¹⁴² E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.98.

¹⁴³ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.98.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.98.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

92

whatever might have been misinterpreted because of understatement.

The introduction of the iceberg brings in an added note of fear:

A host of white flotillas gathering in its wake.¹⁴⁵
Both host and wake in primary generic sense relate to feud and conflict: host in its ME derivation is hoste (victim), in its Latin derivation is hostis (enemy); wake is derived from ON vok (a hole in the ice) --- a track in the water, hence something dangerous.

And gale, facade, and columns with their hint
Of inward altars and of steepled bells
Ringing the passage of the parallels.¹⁴⁶

The imagery set forth here is that of sacrificial offering, and it is quickly followed by the notes of complete oblation:

Demolished the last temple touch of grace.¹⁴⁷
and also

A sloping spur that tapered to a claw.¹⁴⁸
The reader is now informed that the sacrifice will be brutal, the enemy will be given no quarter; and although the incident is related as an individual case, it goes far beyond the limits of the personal, it signifies much more than a personal issue.

¹⁴⁵ E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.99.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.99.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.99.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.99.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

93

It is to be an archetype of the universal. The imagery imparts to the horizon of individual occurrence a comprehensive perspective. Fateful predestinations, even aberrations of such tragic weight and such great pathos may not be viewed from a merely utilitarian or commonsense standpoint.

It is precisely these simple and uncomplicated conclusions which form the path by which in "The Titanic" we are led to a deeper and more moving recognition of the ultimate truth. The lines which follow the introduction of the iceberg become heavy with portent. It is as if by now the poet is convinced that the reader has grasped the horror of what will follow and, therefore, he casts caution to the winds and permits augury, and prediction, and omen to accumulate:

An omen struck the thousands on the shore,
A double accident.¹⁴⁹

The sailors who were witnesses to this "double accident"¹⁵⁰ were not unduly concerned by an event which has become almost a commonplace in navigation lore, but they were profoundly concerned as to the cause: sea's incantations; muttered fables; careening vessels; fatality; writhe like anacondas; passed above its grave; weird mesmeric power; portents hidden in the natal hour;¹⁵¹ As image succeeds image no least residue of doubt remains in the mind of the reader. And now that the

149 E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.100.

150 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.100

151 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.101.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

94

substructure of fatality has been thus firmly laid, the poet comes out in the open with images that can no longer be misconstrued: the inverted tips of a waning moon; sun-hounds; shrieks of whirling shags; and, this morning's augury.¹⁵²

The reader is no longer in suspense, is no longer surprised, the atmosphere of fate has become pronounced, and the reader accepts it with a certain degree of tense expectation.

The interweaving of image threads continues but now the poet with dexterous art introduced a new and contrasting tone.

Security is emphasized and luxury is stressed by an over-elaboration of the commodities of life:

The dinner gave the sense that all was well:
That touch of ballast in the tanks; the feel
Of peace from ramparts unassailable,
Which, added to her seven decks of steel,
Had constituted the Titanic less
A ship than a Gibraltar under heel.¹⁵³

In the six lines quoted security or well-being is implied by: dinner; all was well; ballast; peace; ramparts; unassailable; seven decks; Gibraltar.¹⁵⁴ Here the darkness seems to be also an ally, it seems to envelop the ship with a cloak of protection to shut out unknown dangers:

And night had placed a lazy lusciousness
Upon a surfeit of security.¹⁵⁵

152 E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.101.

153 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.102.

154 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.102.

155 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.102.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

95

But even when security seems doubly assured, and the pride of possession is strongest, even then does the fate imagery appear, a slender undertone which although minor is none the less striving for ascendancy:

The brilliancy
Of mirrors from the tungsten chandeliers,
Had driven out all phantoms which the mind
Had loosed from ocean closets, and assigned
To the dry earth the custody of fears.¹⁵⁶

The poem progresses and the danger becomes more imminent. The passengers, who had at first trusted so confidently in size, in strength, and in power, now begin to be touched by the first faint notes of fear. The fear imagery weaves in and out through the poem:

Amerika obliged to slow down: warns all
Steamships in vicinity, presence of bergs.¹⁵⁷

This is the first indication that there is something menacing about the iceberg. May it not be more than chance coincidence that the danger threatening America (Germanized Amerika) is of national moment?

The Baltic warns Titanic: so Tourraine
Reports of numerous icebergs on the Banks.¹⁵⁸

It is not by chance that Pratt mentions the indication crosses on the charts:

The Hydrographic charts are strewn
With crosses showing bergs.¹⁵⁹

156 E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.102.

157 Ibid., pp.102-103.

158 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.105.

159 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.105.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

96

Then the reader is again given the reiterated note of surface security which very poorly conceals genuine anxiety and well-founded doubt:

Don't worry--Smith's an old dog, knows his ship.¹⁶⁰

Then closely following this meed of praise the actual seaman-ship record of the man is cited, and the reader is made aware that by chance alone has he and his crew been twice saved from the waves.

"'Twas a lucky streak
That at Southampton dock he didn't lose her,
And the Olympic had a narrow squeak
Some months before rammed by the British Cruiser,
The Hawke."

"Straight accident. No one to blame:
'Twas suction--Board absolved them both. The same
With the Teutonic and New York.¹⁶¹

When by imagery former near-accidents are made evident, the poet again quietly but very meaningfully puts in the image of confidence, but the image is ironic, it does not ring true:

No need to fear she's trying to outreach her speed.
There isn't a sign of fog. Besides by now
The watch is doubled at crow's nest and bow.¹⁶²

The reasoning is so illogical that the reader is aware that fear is far greater than assurance. If the night is cloudless, and if there is not a sign of fog the watch would not have been doubled. Finally the fear that is gripping all hearts and that is nameless and purposeless finds an almost childish

¹⁶⁰ E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.105.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.105.

¹⁶² Ibid., "The Titanic", p.105.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

97

outlet, and what was thus far imagery of fate now becomes imagery of superstition:

People are talking of that apparition,
When we were leaving Queenstown--that head showing
Above the funnel rim, and the fires going!
A stoker's face--sounds like a superstition.
But he was there within the stack, all right;
Climed up the ladder and grinned.¹⁶³

While conversation is offering this imagery in one part of the ship, in another quarter the same illogical reasoning is going on, the same image theme of fate and superstition lingers in the conversation of the passengers:

A mummy from the Valley of the Kings
Was brought from Thebes to London. Excavators
Passed out from cholera, black plague or worse.
Egyptians understood--an ancient curse
Was visited on all the violators.¹⁶⁴

Having thus immersed the whole plan in superstition, the poet shows the thematic thread more vividly in its climax:

"No, not on them,
Nor on the Valley of the Kings. What's rummy
About it is -- we're carrying the mummy."¹⁶⁵

The curse, therefore, is far removed from Thebes, from the Museum, from Aberdeen, the curse is on this very ship. To the fear-filled folk who cannot understand why the presentiment of doom overshadows their security this absurd superstition is accepted as a plausible answer. For the reader, already alerted, the criss-crossing imagery cannot be ignored.

¹⁶³ E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.105.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.106.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.106.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

98

This is the tense expectation of the inevitable which is being suggested and endorsed. The card game and the careless gamble continues the same theme. In fact the entire dialogue section of the poem seems to be a barter of life: size and speed would send them soaring;/ Speed is not in her line;/ but comfort and security;/ 'twould be mania to smash the record;/ "Bet you she docks on Tuesday night." "I'll take it."/ She hasn't a chance to make it./ She's not racing for a cup./¹⁶⁶ Even such meaningless banter is interrupted, that the author may again insert the image thread of over-stressed security which leans in the direction of the disaster that one may expect:

I heard Phillips say
He had the finest outfit on the sea¹⁶⁷

Three sources of power.¹⁶⁸

Marconi made the sea as safe as land.¹⁶⁹

Remember the Republic--one thousand saved.¹⁷⁰

Her signals brought a steamer in the nick
Of time. Yes, sir -- Marconi turned the trick.¹⁷¹

Therefore, in the new and untried invention is all hope placed, while at the same time the author hints that the hope of the

¹⁶⁶ E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic," p.107.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.107.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.107.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.107.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.108.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.109.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

99

passengers rests upon a pedestal as fragile as, "She's run by gadgets."¹⁷² The haunting dread alluded to in the conversation is, without any doubt a recurrent theme; and it cannot be denied that it adds its small but verbal and perceptible share to the dark atmosphere already heavy with impending disaster.

Smith hurried to the bridge and Murdoch closed
The bulkheads of the ship as he supposed,
But could not know that with those riven floors
The electro-magnets failed upon the doors.¹⁷³

The "as he supposed" cancels and nullifies the placid, subtle and bland complaisance that both captain and crew held when the ship so gaily left the harbour:

----- and such
The fine adjustment of the bulkhead doors
Geared to the rams, responsive to a touch,
That in collision with iceberg or rock
Or passing ship, she could withstand the shock.¹⁷⁴

The negative value of "fine adjustment", of "geared to the rams", and of "responsive to the touch" is now definitely established. In quick succession again the thread of the uncanny element is visible:

No shock! No more than if something alive
Had brushed her as she passed.¹⁷⁵

In this couplet the fate element is submerged, it is true, but its replacement by apprehension keeps the thematic central

172 E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.110.

173 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.113.

174 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.98.

175 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.113.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

100

figure in view, and prolongs it in:

Just cautious like, feeling her way.
There's ice about. It's dark, no moon to-night,
Nothing to fear, I'm sure.¹⁷⁶

And this apprehensive extension is further elaborated by the ironic suggestion, that carries with it the imagery of a fatal foreshadowing:

Try the new call, maybe
Last chance you'll have to send it.¹⁷⁷

This is an excellent example of a dramatic or sublime action being prepared for, and anticipated, by "prelude hints". Such hints may bring more tension and fear and are more callously insinuated than will be the real tragedy when it finally is disclosed. The poet keeps before the minds of his readers the fragility of apparent security, and the futile effort made by the men of this ship to place unbounded hope in the trivialities of pride and luxury by bringing into focus another thread of the fate-fabric:

So suave the fool-proof sense of life that fear
Had like the unforeseen become a mere
Illusion.¹⁷⁸

In a continuation of the same stanza the poet enumerates the other fragile, man-made contrivances to which the fear-blinded passengers were clinging in vain for reassurance and hope:

¹⁷⁶ E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.114.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.115.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.116.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

101

towering height of funnels;/ solid deck planks;/ light from a thousand lamps;/ the feel of numbers;/ the security of wealth;/ the placid surface of the sea;/ the outwardness of calm;/ the leisure of the passengers;/ deck-hands obedient;/ pearl throated women;/ sables and minks;/¹⁷⁹ and in each and every phrase we sense shallow and insecure values, this is just what the imagery is supposed to convey, notwithstanding the fact that on the surface the wealth, and the efficiency cannot be questioned. Once again the author has built up his images by a false conception of strength and power and once again he rudely shatters all hope by openly declaring to the reader that all is a mere delusion:

-----; the silhouettes
Of men in dinner jackets staging an act
In which delusion passed, deriding fact
Behind the cupped flare of the cigarettes.¹⁸⁰

This image is brought in by the poet that the nonchalant note of unconcern may be once again introduced and the pathos delayed. Ease and comfort would make of the alarm:

A bit of exhibition play.¹⁸¹

or maybe even:

More a parody
Upon the tragic summons of the sea
Than the real script of unacknowledged fears.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.116.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.116.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.116.

¹⁸² Ibid., "The Titanic", p.117.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

102

In fear-images the passengers are described, and in fear-images the crew and captain are portrayed, but still more forcibly does the imagery reveal the tense expectation when the heavens register "a weird design",¹⁸³ when it mirrors the atmosphere of the sea:

Full noon and midnight by a weird design
Both met and parted at the median line.¹⁸⁴

The "thousand lamps" which, but a short while ago had dispelled all doubt now glimmer with another illumination:

----- the upward flow
Had covered the wall brackets where the glow
Diffusing from the frosted bulbs turned green
Uncannily through their translucent screen.¹⁸⁵

With great technical accuracy the descriptions are given of the many efforts to avert disaster, and all along the course of the narrative effort, the central figure or the thematic figure is being continuously re-introduced, at times the theme is very vivid, at other times softly shaded, and then again completely submerged, but ever reappearing with renewed intensity: like a tortuous exit from a tomb;/ like a zone of calm;/ barter of life;/ rendering proof of their oblation;/ quiet and aloof within the maelstrom;/ the code's last jest had died;/ the spell was on the ship;/ strange narcotic quiet;/ semblance of stability;¹⁸⁶ are some of the isolated glimpses

¹⁸³ E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.117.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.117.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.120.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., "The Titanic", pp.124-125.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

103

of imagery, and these are at other times made more compact and more meaningful:

The miracle of day displacing night
 Had worked its fascination to beguile
 Direction of the hours and cheat the night.
 Inside the recreation rooms the gold
 From Arab lamps shone on the burnished tile.
 What hindered the return to shelter while
 The ship clothed in that irony of light
 Offered her berths and cabins as a fold?¹⁸⁷

When the liner finally takes its downward journey to its grave, there is no shock for the reader, no denuement, the outcome has been well prepared.

There is no extended passage in the entire poem which is not linked with the thematic centre by images of fate,¹⁸⁸ images of fear,¹⁸⁹ images of security,¹⁹⁰ images of insecurity,¹⁹¹ images of superstition;¹⁹² and each of these give its varied warnings on the sea,¹⁹³ by the apt efficiency of the modern gadgets of the boat;¹⁹⁴ and in the heavens,¹⁹⁵ each in its varied ways warn the passengers,¹⁹⁶ the captain,¹⁹⁷

¹⁸⁷ E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.125.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.98.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.100.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.101.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.104.

¹⁹² Ibid., "The Titanic", p.100.

¹⁹³ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.100.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.98.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.117.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.105.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.107.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

104

and the crew,¹⁹⁸ and with their subtle logical and/or illogical reasonings prelude all that is to come for the reader.¹⁹⁹ However these images are not scattered with uniform evenness. At certain crucial points in the action, a large number of the unifying image-threads appears almost simultaneously so that our minds are virtually flooded with the diverse, yet closely related, ideas. It cannot be just by chance that the author has caused the "contest" image to appear more than twenty-five times within the short section of the first two stanzas. There is not any doubt that such imagery offers a good instance of the rapid accumulation of symbols and the resultant heightening of emotional effect. The entire passage should be read as Pratt wrote it to appreciate its strength. Lest repetition, or padding, be attributed as a motive for what would actually be clarity, listed here are but the phrases or verbal links that reveal the contest image theme, omitting a number which glance obliquely at the theme but are not directly connected with it:

Line 3, in open test;/ line 3, had run the first lap;/
 line 4, had won;/ line 8, had surpassed;/ line 9, had out-
 classed;/ line 10, rival effort;/ line 13, the Emperor;/
 line 15, at a sign released;/ line 20, her proud claim on
 size;/ line 21, to be the first;/ line 22, was vindicated;/
 line 24, were smothered under;/ line 26, trial spin;/ line 32,

¹⁹⁸E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.114.

¹⁹⁹Ibid., "The Titanic", (all images).

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

105

unthinkable;/ line 33, the papers said so;/ line 34, the first
 unsinkable;/ line 35, proved in advance;/ line 35, the folders
 read so;/ line 46, belief had reached its climax;/ line 47,
 and reinduce that ancient hubris;/ line 52, filched;/ line 54,
 caution was absurd;/ line 55, let the ocean roll;/ line 56,
 the risk at Lloyds;/ line 56, a record low;/²⁹² There is no
 attempt here to present needless repetition but a sincere
 effort to show (in a single passage) the constant criss-
 crossing of images, with their constant adherence to the
 thematic centre. For the purpose of illustration a single
 and definite section of the poem has been chosen at random.
 It is neither the passage where the most abundant strands
 appear nor is it the least fertile section of the poetry, it
 may, therefore, be considered as a just mean.

	<u>Security</u>	<u>Danger</u>
No call from bridge, no whistle, no alarm	whistle,	alarm,
Was shouted. Have the stewards quietly	quietly,	sounded,
Inform the passengers: no vital harm,	inform,	vital harm,
Precautions merely for emergency;	precautions,	emergency,
Collision? Yes, but nature of the blow		collision,
Must not be told: not even the crew		blow
must know;		
Yet all on deck with lifebelts and	lifebelts,	
boats ready,	boats,	
The sailors at the falls and all		
hands steady.	steady,	

201

200 E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", pp.98-99.

201 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.115.

Concerning this constant overlapping of images, and the seemingly unnecessary reinforcement of statements, one must note that Professor Caroline F. Spurgeon who has also met with the same difficulty, and gives us the following enlightenment:

The difficulties and problems connected with the classifying of images can hardly be believed by one who has not himself experienced them. Probably no two people would entirely agree as to the number of images to be found in any one play. (One is constantly faced by the question) is it one image, or two, or three? Is it a main image? Is it an image with a subsidiary idea? And if it is subsidiary how should it be classified?

As I worked it soon became clear that some images, although they form a single imagery must be entered, for purposes of reference, under two or more headings.²⁰²

The Personal Image In The Titanic

By some literary critics this poem is interpreted as man's traditional struggle with nature, wherein the human force represented by the ship struggles with and is defeated by the natural force represented by the iceberg. To the writer of this thesis the implication of the poem is much greater. The contest is far more vital than a simple opposition of human and natural force. The author of the poem is a Christian poet whose Christian ideals are portrayed in all his work. In spite of the apparently pessimistic note of "The Titanic" and its fate imagery its author could not let Nature conquer, or the uselessness of the struggle, and the purposelessness of existence itself would parallel the predicament spoken of by Milton:

²⁰² Caroline Spurgeon, *op.cit.*, p.359.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

107

O Father, gracious was that word which closed
 Thy sovran sentence, that Man should find grace;
 For which both heaven and earth shall high extoll
 Thy praises, with the immortal sound
 Of Hymns and sacred Songs, wherewith thy Throne
 Encompassed shall resound thee ever blessed.
 For should Man finally be lost, should Man
 Thy creature, late so loved, thy youngest Son
 Fall circumvented thus by fraud, though joined
 With his own folly? that be from thee far,
 That be far from thee, Father, who art judge
 Of all things made, and judgest only right.
 Or shall the adversary thus obtain
 His end, and frustrate thine, shall he fulfill
 His malice, and thy goodness bring to naught,
 Or proud return though to his heavier doom,
 Yet with revenge accomplished and to Hell
 Draw after him the whole race of mankind
 By him corrupted?²⁰³

Even the most casual reader of Pratt's poetry will upon reflection concede that if the poem has a meaning deeper than the surface one, the sinking of the luxury liner, then it is most certainly not that of the destruction of Man by Nature. Other literary critics interpret the poem to be a statement that primitive nature is opposed to civilized human existence.²⁰⁴ We may not limit ourselves to either of the conventional interpretations if we discover that the supposed mortal enemies, ship and iceberg, were in reality "brothers under the skin", and that is just what might be shown if the symbolism of the poem were worked out. It is this writer's conviction that the struggle which Pratt is portraying is the eternal one of man's life of grace warring with his sinful nature -- it is

²⁰³ John Milton, The Poetical Works of John Milton, London, Oxford University Press, 1925, pp.xi-554.

²⁰⁴ John Sutherland, op.cit., pp.30-37.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

108

temptation dragging man down but conscience and grace striving together and finally winning the victory.

This symbolic treatment of the poem is beyond the scope of this paper but it has already been stated that when a symbolic meaning is to be given, it is always prepared for, by adequate and comprehensive imagery. It seems to be necessary to show here that the intensity of feeling and the emotion evoked by "The Titanic", as well as the sharpness of its focus are revealed by the fact that in Pratt's imagination there runs throughout only one overpowering and dominating and continuous image. So compelling is this, that even well-marked different and subsidiary images are pressed into its service, and used to augment and emphasize it.

In the poem we are always conscious of buffeting, strain, and strife, and, at moments, of bodily tension to the point of agony. So naturally does this flow from the circumstances that we scarcely realize how greatly this sensation is increased in us by images and metaphors of the human body in anguished movement, tugged, wrenched, beaten, pierced, gashed, tortured, and finally wounded unto death. One can scarcely glance at any stanza of the poem without being struck by these images and by verbs used by the poet to portray every kind of bodily movement: motion which generally involves pain, and is sometimes used to express mental suffering as well as abstract and physical facts. Although it has been mentioned

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

109

that a statistical count of images is not considered to be essential to this study, yet in this case, the consistency, the universality, and the strength of the images has prompted the writer to make a count of the images of "bodily movement" which are attributed to both the ship and the berg, and which argue strongly for the case in point, that the one and the other is man's fallen and man's redeemed nature each striving for victory. There are two hundred and fifty-eight such images, as well as some forty others which might be considered as being obliquely relative to body-actions, these latter lack a certain definiteness and might thereby be discredited by the over-fastidious searcher of humanizing factors; on the other hand, even these are sufficiently coherent and adjacent to prove our point. Only a limited number of the images may be included in this paper. These will serve to vivify the recurrent theme of the inward struggle in man and could later crystallize into the symbolism of personal human conflict.

The personal image is not always an extended one, and sometimes it is complicated and difficult to classify on account of the different elements contained. Professor Spurgeon gives this example from her study of Shakespeare:

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

110

Such was Lady Macbeth's query,
 Was the hope drunk
 Wherein you dressed yourself? Hath it slept since?
 And wakes it now, to look so green and pale
 At what it did so freely?²⁰⁵

In this passage Professor Spurgeon classifies the images of a) personification, b) drunkenness, c) clothes, d) sleep, and e) illness. One or other may be considered as the main image and the others cross-references, according to the writers own idea of the importance of the one or the other; or according to the point in question but there is actually no arbitrary hierarchy that must be adhered to. Therefore, it is with the Shakespearian images as guides that the writer of this thesis has endeavored to classify the Pratt images, no effort was made to read meanings into the poetry that were not there in the first place;

Only when the noise of building ceased and the hammers were silent and still was the ship ready for launching. The builders had run a race with the German builders of the "Imperator". The planning of the luxury liner had been a dream of builders and navigators. Air shots played on the rivets of the rival boat. "The Titanic" claimed her proud place. Power pulsed through her engines. She waited for her trial²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ Caroline Spurgeon, op.cit., p.360.

²⁰⁶ In the following personal images, page numbers have not been specified because the imagery is selected throughout the poem, and is therefore quite easily identified. In each case the thought is paraphrased but the actual image word underlined as it was given by Pratt.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

111

spin. Her bulkhead doors were responsive. The ship should be able to survive the shock, because it was watertight and would float. The wireless, so perfect, should have the power to slay the cattle of the Sun and filch the lightnings from the fist of Zeus. The iceberg was calved, its motion was casual and indeterminate; its recessions and advances were blind. It became deformed by the sun, until the claw was visible. It lurched and shambled; at birth it had been given impulse. The "New York" broke her mooring cables and these writhed. The tugs answered. The backwash tore at the "Teutonic". The little crafts behaved and the waves were inordinate. The universality of the bodily movement is to be especially noted in the section of the poem in which the comforts of the ship are itemized:

A shoal of Blue-Points waited to be served. Hors d'oeuvres were fashioned. Caviare and paprika were all ready for the meal. The courses on the menu card measured themselves against Falstaffian juices.

The equipment and apparatus of the ship are also made more vivid by bodily movement images: The engines rival the tread of feet. There was a feel of peace. Science responded to gadgets; electric lifts ran and light drove out phantoms. The crowds on the ship smirked, talked, canvassed, sat, swallowed and dictated, all the while that the engines hummed and the wash of the sea had the serenity of sleep at rural hearths. The engine gears were drenched in oil. The ship

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

112

ship seemed to swim in oil, because the bridge was so quiet, even the noisy engines called for laconic speech; and the judgment stood in need of reason. Morning of Sunday promised and the guy ropes ceased to murmur. The smoke climbed. The ship glided and seemed native to her thoroughfare, because of her strength and grace. The apparition climbed up the ladder and grinned. The ancient curse visited the violators, and found its way. The skeleton leered down from a photograph. "The Titanic" could smash the record of the "Mauretania". At first the ships run gently to find their breathing and get rid of boiler cough. A crash might hit the engines, but wireless could switch in emergency help. Marconi had made the sea safe. The Baltic heard the call. The Slavonia was answered, when she became disabled. A buzzer sounds and gives the sign of danger. The sea flung back its lights. In the heavens the Bear stalked, and the Dog-Star trailed; while Capella was so close that a hand might seize the sapphire, while zenith and nadir meet and Betelgeuse and Aldebaran swam and the Milkmaid passed. The Californian was fearful of the icepack but the boat hit a sea which was as calm as a landlocked bay. The answer of the helm was so slight it did not break the sleep of the passengers. Wind or tide, or rock or ice could not harm the ship. The iceberg tore the skin of the ship. The ice retarded the progress of the Carpathia. "The Titanic" leaned on her side to ease the

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

113

pain. The sharp angle at which the ship was canted stopped the captain's breath. The enormity of the disaster stabbed his brain. The Titanic was wounded unto death. If panic might clutch the immigrants in the treerage they would make a Balkan scramble for the boats. Eight ships answered the the operator's call. The Virginian heard but the Californian was deaf. Momentarily fear had been vanquished by the pouring of oil and the feel of numbers and the outward calmness of the ship. Delusion derided fact. An arrow of fire sped to the sky, and topped the foremast. Yet unacknowledged fear was real. The ship presented its compliments and desired the Master of the Band to play. Noon and midnight met, and the black waters outspread the fragments of the berg. The boat resumed her level, therefore, the passengers were lured back to the promenade. The brilliance of the deserted floors excelled their own reflections; the eras gone returned and held the mind in abandonment. The lifeboat felt for her port, and tested her rivets, the draught-fans roared, while the search-lights beams uncovered the iceberg. The steel strength of the controls is sapped and the suction may swallow the nearby crafts. The angle of list assaults the eye. The frosted bulbs turn green, showers of sparks danced, the hoppers ceaselessly dumped the ashes. As the meaning of danger became apparent contagion struck the faces. There was a hush and utterance of fear. Soon the second lifeboat, impatient of

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

114

delay, departed. The cold night air enswathed the stoker. The waters raced and lapped the fo'c'sle. There were no barked commands, nor registered protests; the gallant men bartered life with grace of Castilian courtesy. The heroic lady who stayed beside her husband took her fate with open hands; the child waived his privileges of youth and piled inches on his stature. One could borrow courage from Guggenheim. The first collapsible crumbled up; the third transferred its cargo. Water sucked at seamen's feet. Soon after this power grew fainter, and the jet stammered, just before the code's last jest died between the electrodes. A crescendo of fears did not besiege the heavens and turn to riot. The ocean was unruffled in spite of the ship's deformity of line. The ship had the semblance of stability until the decline in inches crawled into feet. The miracle of day displaced night and worked a fascination which beguiled the hours, and cheated. The ship was clothed in light, and offered her cabins as a fold. The hearts took reassurance at the sound of the violins. The fo'c'sle had gone under the creep of the water. The swell backed into the stokehold. The guywires tugged and broke at the eyes. The buckled plates leaned, fell and smashed, before they tilted and crashed. Deeds envisioned volitions in which self-preservation faught. Hope gleamed from the Carpathia's lights, while the sea as a shlt tonic kept the valour of the heart alive. The engines took everything with them, then

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

115

with a roar that drowned all cries and shook the wathhers, the liner took her journey to her grave. The only trace of the deed left on the iceberg, was the last wave from the Titanic fretting its base. It remained silent, composed, a gray shape with a face. And it still remained the master.²⁰⁷

As it has already been explained the images herein contained are referred to by a single word only, whereas in the actual poem the image matrix lends an even greater reality. They are designated by the writer as "the personal image" rather than as "personifications". If at some future time the symbolism of the poem should be worked out as the grace-nature struggle of man against sin then the personal image would be the thread that would carry the burden of the proof.

Any repetition that this section of the chapter contains is intentional because it differs in direction from previous examples.

Lest the condensed form of the images cited above lead the reader to think that mere references are being quoted, once again the words of Professor Spurgeon will be referred to, to substantiate the legitimacy of the study:

207 E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", pp.98-128.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

116

But mere references are quite different from images; and no computation of images only has, so far as I know, ever before been made out. A writer refers to a thing in quite a different mood and with quite a different poetic impulse from that which produces a simile or metaphor, which comes usually with great spontaneity and under stress of heightened feeling.²⁰⁸

The study of the sea imagery in this thesis has been intensive and extensive; it has been sincere, and it is the hope of the writer that no phase of it has been either exaggerated or under-estimated.

One expects a Newfoundlander to sing to the sea sometimes, but in the poems of Pratt the sea is identified with mood, with tragedy, with emotions as wide as the world, and as deep as ocean depths. There is in his poems more than a suggestion of the over-whelming power, the relentlessness, the grim surge of the vast Atlantic swell. The poetry is compact of music and of nature's voices speaking in authoritative tones.²⁰⁹

With the author of this review the present writer is attempting to prove that the sea in Pratt's poetry "is identified with mood, with tragedy, with emotions as wide as the world, and as deep as ocean depths."

To this "poet of the sea", the ocean's strength may be as tender as a mother's love:

Thou (the sea) dost cover with a tranquil grace, those whom the wind had buffeted, and laid upon thy waters--dead. In darkness thou dost cover them, as some white-winged mother of the crags, her rock-nurtured brood in the drowsy silence of her wings.²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ Caroline Spurgeon, *op.cit.*, p.43.

²⁰⁹ S. Morgan-Powell in Montreal Daily Star, May 5, 1923.

²¹⁰ E.J. Pratt, "Sea Variations", p.470.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

117

Imagery of Landscape

The study of landscape in the poetry of Pratt will include not only natural landscape as such, rather this chapter will include a consideration of all phases of nature and its seasonal changes; its rocks and hills, its valleys and forests, the weather and its changes, the seasons, the sky, sunset and dawn, the clouds and rain and wind, sunshine and shadow, the garden, the flowers, the trees and the grasses, as well as people, animals, birds and reptiles. In other words the present chapter will be devoted to a study of the sensuous imagery in those poems which are not classed as sea poems and it will also include the imagery of nature even in the sea poems.

The images may make their appeal as visual or auditory, as static and inactive, or as fluid or dynamic. The images may possess any one of these elements, or any possible combination. Nature may be at one time the vehicle of coldness and dreariness and at another time it may just as effectively convey light and life and love. It will be shown that in the nature imagery, as we have already noted in the sea imagery, the poet is more concerned with the functional technique than with descriptive and ornate aspects. The poet may at times seem to use nature as an objective correlative of his own inner state of mind and this may cause an overlapping of the sensory and emotional elements of imagery. This does not,

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

118

however, imply any contradiction. For Pratt, nature always exists in its own right. The wasteland motif may at times seem to appear but when this happens it is not merely subjective rather does its futility result from opposing forces and in these opponents the poet centres his interest and not in the frustration which may be the resultant.

In our first consideration of nature the images of growing things will occupy a prominent place. These represent the non-static element in nature and as such are parallel to images of motion in the sea.

Plants - Flowers

In this "growing group" will be classed images of flowers and trees, of fruit and grass and weeds.

It was evident in the sea imagery that the poet is especially fond of glowing colours, and it is because the same observation can be made here that flower imagery will be studied first. Pratt does not use flower imagery very often but when he does use it the images are rich in meaning, therefore the writer of the thesis offers for your consideration the symbol tendency that seems to be applicable.

By its very nature, imagery is multileveled, through its pictorial channels the tangible may be given intangible qualities and this aspect always makes a special appeal to any writer who seeks a Christian meaning in the world of the natural, or a romantic idealism amidst surrounding actualities.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

119

There are ideas too vague to be grasped except by a realistic conception and some writers seem to depend entirely upon personal or individual images which may be expanded and applied thereto; on the other hand, there are writers who are not so self-reliant and these depend almost solely upon traditional symbols, which have stood the test of time. By a fresh and individual application of that which time has proven, these writers re-vivify their imagery and impart to it an undercurrent of almost historical meaning that might otherwise be missed. In either case there will be necessary overlapping. By borrowing from tradition, the personal image of to-day attains a richness from the past; while the symbol and image of antiquity that is transferred to a modern literary setting is re-vitalized and intensified.

In this section of the thesis the suggestion is offered that the rose imagery employed by Pratt may be the symbolic rose that has served through the years from Le Roman de la Rose of Guillaume de Lorris down through the writings of Chaucer and Spenser and a host of other poets even to Yeats, Joyce, Lawrence and Eliot and unto our own day.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

120

Dante's rose offers four definite meanings or, by his own account at least, was cultivated for that purpose. Beyond these references.... the rose embodies his feelings and by the aid of context presents feelings which may or may not be the same as his. But this indefinite meaning, although affirming the rose as more than allegorical and comprising after the decay of his convention almost the only meaning that persists, is secondary. With Yeats's English-speaking rose, the proportions of definite and indefinite are reversed.²¹¹

Indeed the rose as a literary image may trace its ancestry even to early Scriptural phrasing. Isaiah used rose imagery when he expressed in prophetic words the dearest hope of his people:

The wilderness shall blossom like a rose.²¹²

Solomon made use of this same rose of love and hope:

Let us crown ourselves with rosebuds before
they be withered.²¹³

In our present day wasteland values vie with industrialized frustration to stifle the tendrils of hope, yet in spite of this the rose still blossoms.

The rose of Yeats...is a fading rose: political in part by local tradition, she is Dark Rosaleen or Ireland herself; philosophically, she is all but Shelley's intellectual beauty on one hand and on the other.... she is spirit nailed by time upon the cross of matter; alchemically...she signifies the great work of transmuting matter into spirit and increasing its spiritual content; aesthetically she represents that organization of elements that provides catharsis and peace; and as my pronoun should make plain, she is a woman.²¹⁴

²¹¹ William York Tindall, *The Literary Symbol*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1955, p.42.

²¹² Isaiah: 35,1.

²¹³ Wisdom of Solomon: 2,8.

²¹⁴ William York Tindall, *op.cit.*, p.42.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

121

"Le Roman de la Rose" is still a romance whose idealistic beauty may be traced in twentieth century thought. The rose of the Pratt poems may be but a very pale copy of the earlier and more vivid blooms but it, too, is capable of bearing a considerable share of the vast range of meanings associated with the rose of tradition.

Because it is a flower of beauty appearing in early springtime the rose is associated with love and woman and these concepts can without difficulty be transposed to their religious equivalents, divine love and the female fertility deities; or if we transplant the rose from pagan soil to Christian literary gardens, its meaning is also transposed to Christ and the Virgin. The flower, though made from matter by flux and time, is eternal. From its association with the female deities the rose readily reflects motherhood and Mother Nature's creation. This latter concept is enhanced by the flower's annual appearance after the barren winter season. The idea of birth is frequently applied to spiritual rebirth. Thus the complex of beauty, love, creation, and eternity makes the rose the embodiment of fear and desire, of quarrel and peace and because of this applicable to a whole range of human idealism, whether that idealism be secular or ecclesiastical or personal or traditional. If we look at the negative side of these concepts the rose is also seen to be a symbol. It is a fragile flower which quickly fades, hence it

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

122

becomes a symbol of death and the mutability of earthly beauty. Every rose has its thorn, thus the flower portrays the dualism of mortal life with its tapestry of joys and sorrows.

The poetic rose may portray human love and happiness or spiritual love surrounded by the thorns of sin. The rose may be an image of fulfillment which must be enjoyed before it fades. This queen of the flowers in temporal gardens may represent Our Lady, the Queen of Heaven.

Pratt makes use of the rose image not, it must be stated, the full significance of its richness but with a range of meaning sufficiently varied to combine both the traditional thought and the personal application. In tribute to his mother who had been stricken by blindness he writes:

But when the dawn and the meridian
Entered their sudden fusion with the night;
When roses and anemones began
To grow as winter rushes in your sight;
I wondered
By what vicarious starlight you could trace
Horizons.²¹⁵

That the poem is a dedication of love-unto-love is a sufficient guarantee that when the roses (to all appearances) had faded to winter rushes the love did not die. Mortal sight has small office here, spiritual insight will keep the love blossoming even after the rose will have been transplanted to an eternal garden.

²¹⁵ E.J. Pratt, "Blind", p.227.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

123

In another poem the rose imagery attains cosmic greatness:

And when the drifting years had sighted land,
And hills and plains declared their birth
Amid volcanic throes,
What was the lapse before the marshal's hand
Had found a garden on the earth,
And led forth June with her first rose?²¹⁶

Here the poet has made use of the rose as an image of fertility, which is also indicated in the concepts "birth" and "throes"; as an image of the mother-love of Eve given to earth in the garden of joy and gladness, but because the thorn of original sin was nearby a redemption was necessary; as an image of the beauty that must have flourished in the first June garden awaited during the four thousand "drifting years."²¹⁷ and finally as an image of the spiritual love of the Almighty Creator who "sighted land" and planned the pattern for mankind. That these connotations are not superimposed upon the poem and that the poetic pattern remains consistent becomes more evident as the poem continues:

And what the gulf between that and the hour,
Late in the simian-human day,
When Nature kept her tryst
With the enfoldment of the star and flower--
When in her sacrificial way
Judea blossomed with her Christ!²¹⁸

²¹⁶ E.J. Pratt, "The Highway", p.228.

²¹⁷ Ibid., "The Highway", p.228.

²¹⁸ Ibid., "The Highway", p.228.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

124

The implied rose imagery in "blossomed" imparts a spiritual meaning. The rose because of its colour, and because in pagan times it had so frequently been employed as a merit award for chivalric deed, became in a Christian era to symbolize martyrdom and even the King of Martyrs -- Christ. In the stanza under consideration here the rose image is submerged but its implication is clearly evident. "Nature kept her tryst."²¹⁹ The world had been waiting through dreary drifting years, but the waiting was not in vain; Pratt poetically phrases the fulfillment as "With unfoldment of the star and flower".²²⁰ Christian literature has often referred to Our Lady as "Stella Maris" or "Star of the Sea" and again, as in the preceding stanza the blossom or flower is Christ. The sorrows of Bethlehem make up "the sacrificial way" and constitute the thorns which accompany the rose.

In a more recent religious poem Pratt has paid tribute to Christ's Mother in parallel imagery of joy and sorrow:

Out of the morning of that birth
The loneliest Mother of the earth,
The woman of the Shadowed Face,
Of all the mothers of our race
Became the most exalted one.²²¹

219 E.J. Pratt, "The Highway", p.228.

220 Ibid., "The Highway", p.229.

221 Ibid., "Mother and Child", in Canadian Tribute to Mary, 1947, Ottawa, p.21.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

125

And the same two thoughts blend readily in the rose imagery. The Mother became "the most exalted one" when in her sacrificial way "Judaea blossomed with her Christ".

It is true that in certain parts of this "The Highway" poem, the poet makes use of submerged imagery but in other parts the meaning is crystal clear. In the concluding stanza the spiritual concept is apparent and the imagery cannot be misunderstood:

But what made our feet miss the road that brought
The world to such a golden trove,
In our so brief span?
How may we grasp again the hand that wrought
Such light, such fragrance, and such love,
O star! O rose! O Son of Man!²²²

The rose of the Passion that blossomed along a sacrificial way has in this stanza become the rose of the Resurrection, and the star partakes of the rose glory, the mother-love is the reflection of the love of the Son, the Son of Man. Mankind's quest during our industrialized and commercialized days is to regain the highway that eventually will lead to the "golden trove" of Heaven. Our feet have "missed the road" the thorns of sin have been abundant and piercing; we must:

---- grasp again the hand that wrought
Such light, such fragrance, and such love,²²³

²²² E.J. Pratt, "The Highway", p.229.

²²³ Op. cit., p.229.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

126

if we are to find security and hope fulfilled.

A modern literary critic of the poetry of Pratt paid no heed to the rose imagery (which may easily account for the true meaning to the poem) but did express his belief in a spiritual connotation:

Pratt accepts destruction as "a form of sacrifice" and he knows that it will be overcome--or rather that it has been overcome--by the sacrifice of Christ.-- The exaltation has its course in a recollection of Christ's triumph, of a compassion able to annul sin and death.²²⁴

In the poem "Still Life" Pratt again employs the rose image but with ironic connotation for poets who shrink from their sublime calling. This time "roses blanched of red" will be our offering.

"Still Life" is Pratt's most sustained study in irony, an assault dangerously polite upon the dwellers in ivory towers, those who need stillness about them if their hearts are to flow into verse. Underneath the surface courtesy is a grim stress upon the intensity and the significance of the times. The multitude of great themes calling imperiously for a poetic treatment adequate to their burden of splendour and pain.²²⁵

The love is still present although the fertility significance has waned; and the author feels that the spiritual implication need not be stressed because what might have been futurity has become actuality:

²²⁴ John Sutherland, The Poetry of E.J. Pratt, p.17.

²²⁵ E.K. Brown in "Letters in Canada" in University Of Toronto Quarterly, 1943, p.307.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

127

To the poets who have fled
 To pool where little breezes dusk and shiver,
 Who need still life to deliver
 Their souls to their songs,
 We offer roses blanchéd of red
 In the Orient gardens,
 With April lilies to limn
 On the Japanese urns.²²⁶

During the war years the poet became disturbed by the needless waste of human life and the prodigality of spilt blood; hence, one of his rare ironic comments tinged with bitterness has crept into the poem "The Invaded Field":

They took their parables from mud -
 How pure the crocus grows!
 See how the fragrance of a rose
 May spring from buried blood.²²⁷

Were the reader to lift these lines from content, they would, without doubt, be pessimistic in meaning; as though the poet were convinced that "the struggle nought availeth"; as though the rose which does not forego its symbolism of love, and in this case it is the love among nations, had but a slender chance to spring from the futile sacrifice of youth's offering. To look upon the lines at a spiritual level (again out of content) one might interpret the words as casting a doubt upon the efficacy of Divine Redemption; as though the poet would say that the blood of Christ is buried and there is little possibility that it will yield a rose of love and life. To regard the stanza in this

²²⁶ E.J. Pratt, "Still Life", p.22.

²²⁷ Ibid., "The Invaded Field", p.20.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

128

superficial sense is not to look beneath the surface, it is to disregard the matrix in which the thought is found; the imagery has a new level of meaning in context.

For close following upon such a thought the poet comes to the assistance of his reader with the assurance:

So on the promise of this yield
The youth swung down the road,
-----and sowed
Their bodies on the field.²²⁸

In the national crisis our youth did not count the cost, but on the promise of the yield of eternal life, this mortal life was unhesitatingly cast into the furrows of time and the poem ends with a wish, the sincerity of which must cancel any ironic suggestion:

Let life infect both leaf and flower
But death preserve the thorn.²²⁹

The flower, the rose, that will spring up on the invaded field will be the fruit of love, and the award of sacrifice. The sorrows in which this yield was conceived and begotten will be "unto life everlasting".

In another poem the rose of love and memory is evident. The weary missionary is lifted from the sordid terror-laden scenes of the present and placed for a brief moment's respite in the fields of his homeland:

²²⁸ E.J. Pratt, "The Invaded Field", p.21.

²²⁹ Ibid., "The Invaded Field", p.22.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

129

The Wilderness? That flight of tanagers;
 Those linguists from the bobolinks; those beeches,
 Roses and water-lilies -----
 ----- For a time the fields
 Could hypnotize the mind to scenes of France.²³⁰

Throughout the Pratt flower-imagery the rose images are richest in the meanings of traditional concept and individual setting, yet other flower images are found.

The lotus bloom fabled to cause forgetfulness of care and heedlessness of sorrow is found in the pathos of "The Empty Room":

I know that were my soul to-night
 Strung to the silence of this room,
 I'd hear remembered footfalls light
 As wayward drift of lotus bloom.²³¹

Could the soul be tuned like unto a musical instrument and made to vibrate to silence, then forgetfulness of the fret and worry of a work-a-day existence would drift in and mother-love would transcend actuality and cause the intangible to become once more tangible.

At other times flowers and plants awaken memory:

Brebeuf,
 His mind a moment throwing back the curtain
 Of eighteen years, could see the orchard lands,
 The cidreries, the peasants at the Fairs,
 The undulating miles of wheat and barley,
 Gardens and pastures rolling like a sea
 From Lisieux to Le Havre.²³²

²³⁰ E.J. Pratt, "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.81.

²³¹ Ibid., "The Empty Room", p.96.

²³² Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.91.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

130

The undulating miles of wheat and barley, the gardens and pastures rolling like a sea awaken memories of a happy homeland beyond this rolling ocean.

As a sign of spring, as a sign of labour completed, the poet gives us the image of "the bloodroot pushing through the leaf-mould".²³³ It is into this same leaf-mould of forgetfulness of self, "of fern and briar and fungus"²³⁴ into which the trails of the pioneers sank, but the final result is not oblivion. By submerged imagery we are told:

There in due time to blossom
Into the highways that lead to the crest of the hill.²³⁵

The coming of spring is foretold in:

The time of the cowslip is near,
For a yellow flame
Was found in a tuft of green.²³⁶

Other flower images are found in, "The season for blood-root and bud-break"²³⁷ and also in "the petals of the hyacinth,"²³⁸ which became a harbinger of death, and in "blood was on the hawthorn"²³⁹ which proclaims to the reader that England was going through the time of its passion preceding the eternal April.

²³³ E.J. Pratt, *Brebeuf and His Brethren*, p.82.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, *"Brebeuf and His Brethren"*, p.94.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, *"Brebeuf and His Brethren"*, p.94.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, *"Gomes not the Seasons Here"*, p.21.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, *"The Impatient Earth"*, p.29.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, *"Come Away, Death"*, p.16.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, *"Dunkirk"*, p.1.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

131

When the poet tells us that there was a time when Death came "with a touch of chivalry in his approach --- and with acanthus leaf" the reference is clearly to the classical era, and this image the poet employs to underscore the universality of Death's visitation. There are many lily images, most of which are decorative and ornamental rather than functional as in:

All passionless, through the distant sands,
Where the wreathed lilies of the spray, keen sifted
By the late winds are strewn,
Thy children call.²⁴⁰

In imagery of spiritual impact, when "at the darkest moment, the world with its dead weight of burdens seemed to pause before the door" and

All the light remaining was bereft
Of colour and design in full eclipse;
No fragrance in the fields; no flowers left
But poppies with their charred autumnal lips.²⁴¹

Trees

Frequently in the poetry of Pratt we come upon tree images. It is the hardy, sturdy trees which would be found on Canadian soil that the poet uses -- trees whose primary purpose would be to protect from icy blasts and, by analogy, to shelter from hardship and danger:

²⁴⁰ E.J. Pratt, "Sea Variations", in Canadian Poets, p.474.

²⁴¹ Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.218.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

132

(The priests) met at the doors
By screams and blows; they would betake themselves
To the evergreens for shelter.²⁴²

On another occasion the poet by implication tells the reader that the trees shut out the Iroquois brutality:

But there outside the fort was evidence
Of tenure for the future. Acres rich
In soil extended to the forest fringe.²⁴³

The grandeur and the stature of the Canadian trees enhanced the stories of New France and summoned volunteers to whose hearts spoke the,

The stories of those northern boundaries
Where in the winter the white pines could brush
The Pleiades.²⁴⁴

That the trees of the forest played a more-than-scenic rôle in the life of Brebeuf in Canada is illustrated in the lines which show temptation conquered and the will renewed to return to the field of labour:

Each year in France but served to clarify
His vision. At Rouen he gauged the height
Of the Cathedral's central tower in terms
Of pines and oaks around the Indian lodge.²⁴⁵

These same trees indelibly stamped upon the priests' memory exert an irresistible appeal till the heroic life story is closed and the reader is assured that in another era will echo anew the clarion call:

²⁴² E.J. Pratt, "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.67.

²⁴³ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.80.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.38.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.44.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

133

Three hundred years have passed, and the winds of God
Which blew over France, are blowing once more through
the pines
That bulwark the shores of the great Fresh Water Sea.246

The unwonted silence of the trees is noted in an image of strife subdued and peace restored:

A sudden truce among the oaks
Released their fratricidal arms;
The poplars straightened to attention,
As the winds stopped to listen
To the sound of a motor drone --
And then the drone was still.²⁴⁷

In the supreme moment of human surrender and divine conquest, it is the forest trees which bear silent yet eloquent testimony to the sic transit gloria mundi idea of the scenes of the Brebeuf drama!

Now three o'clock, and capping the height of the passion,
Confusing the sacraments under the pines of the forest,
Under the incense of balsam, under the smoke of the pitch,
Was offered the right of the font.²⁴⁸

As the seasons pass the trees become as unreal as dreams or legends:

Last August elms and birches seem
Like half-remembered legends in a dream.²⁴⁹

In other imagery the poet uses trees to bring in the glory of colour, nature's dower for the thrush:

246 E.J. Pratt, "Brébeuf and His Brethren", p.94.

247 Ibid., "Come Away, Death", p.17.

248 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.91.

249 Ibid., "A November Landscape". p.36.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

134

To north, age-old
 Hemlocks were tipped by blue of Tyrian dye.
 Through spruces jet against the western sky
 The level sun was pouring tides of gold.²⁵⁰

Seeds

Seed images are usually figurative, it is the seed planted to yield the "whitened harvest" in which this Christian poet is chiefly interested:

A years success flattered the priestly hope
 That on this central field, seed would be sown
 On which the yield would be the Huron nation.²⁵¹

There is an image of grass that carries with it the same scriptural import:

'Twas ploughing only--for eight years would pass
 Before even the blades appeared.²⁵²

And in more definite terms the same imagery is repeated:

And that a richer harvest would be gleaned
 Of duskier grain from the same seed, on more
 Forbidding ground.²⁵³

Harvest and Autumn Imagery

Harvest and autumn imagery is found in Pratt's poetry, and whether its purpose be figurative or literal, it in every instance indicates fulfillment:

250 E.J. Pratt, "The Fugitive", p.49.

251 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren, p.48.

252 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren, p.42.

253 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren, p.43.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

135

On such a soil tilled with those skilful hands
 Those passion flowers and lilies of the East
 The Aves and the Paternosters bloomed.²⁵⁴

Another image shows autumn as a time of dreams come true, spiritual gains would be accompanied by Bourbon commercial glory:

The myth at last resolved into the fact.
 Along that route, it was believed, French craft
 Freight with jewels, spices, tapestries,
 Would sail to swell the coffers of the Bourbons.
 Such was the dream though only buffalo roamed
 The West and autumn slept upon the prairies.²⁵⁵

In an autumn the "god of harvest" toils that the granaries may be replenished:

Came priests and paladins, soon to descend
 To earth with swinging censers, to attend
 The god of harvest, down among his wheat.²⁵⁶

Autumn imagery also proclaims that the classic era has passed, feats of wonder are now but memories:

To-day the autumn tints are on
 The trampled grass at Marathon.²⁵⁷

In autumn imagery Pratt shows that as long as life shall last there will be struggle and strife:

There are months still to go for the autumn
 And months for the poppies to bloom,
 Though hate and greed have grown to their harvest,
 Though tolerance, forgiveness, and love are forgotten,
 Like the scars on the body of Christ.²⁵⁸

254 E.J. Pratt, "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.81.

255 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.81

256 Ibid., "A Prairie Sunset", p.223.

257 Ibid., "Still Life", p.23.

258 Ibid., "The Impatient Earth", p.30.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

136

Autumn is a miser, with a hoard of gorgeous colors:

November came to-day and seized the whole
Of the autumnal store of reds, and left
But drabs and yellows on the land.²⁵⁹

Autumn is an extinguisher not only of the life of nature but
also of light and love; spring will rekindle these:

Winter has bridged the autumn back to spring;
For suddenly you entered your spell
Had power to start a desert blossoming.²⁶⁰

Autumn is a weaver: "It weaves the sense of desolation and
regret through clay and stubble."²⁶¹ But the image that Pratt
seems to love to portray is that of the harvest of war with
its yield of peace: "The plasma that was being brought across
the ocean would revein the vines for fresher fruits:

In a new harvest on a hoped tomorrow.²⁶²

Weather

In the class of images under the general heading
"Weather" we find that a large proportion of the pictures
deal with clouds and cloud-effects. Herein beauty and
splendor is enhanced or the dying clouds contend with the
growing light and prelude mist and storm. In one vivid image
the poet's fancy paints the pageant of the sky:

²⁵⁹ E.J. Pratt, "A November Landscape", p.36.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., "Magic", p.37 (Many Moods).

²⁶¹ Ibid., "A November Landscape", p.36 (Many Moods).

²⁶² Ibid., "Behind the Log", p.46.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

137

And scarcely less resplendent was the passing,
 When with the night winds rising on the land,
 The hosts were led by a Valkyrian hand
 To their abodes, accompanied by the massing
 Of amber clouds touched with armorial red,
 By thrones dissolving, and by spirals hurled
 From golden plinths, announcing to the world
 That Day, for all its blazonry was dead.²⁶³

In this image the clouds come in martial procession
 to announce the death of Day.

In another image the clouds instead of coming in
 procession are departing in flight as though they were being
 driven on by the fury of the wind.

Then with the intermittent lull
 Of wind and the dull
 Break of transitory light,
 Where rents in the shawl of darkness
 Revealed star-bursts and clouds in flight.²⁶⁴

At another time a cloud is seen in architectural
 splendor:

A northern cloud became a temple spire,
 A southern reach showed argosies on fire.²⁶⁵

For Pratt although the clouds may frequently be
 amassed in fury and the rage of storm at other times he makes
 them almost eager to catch whatever light is available in the
 heavens.

Through a rift of sky
 A level shaft, the first one for a week,
 Quivered on the edge of a cloud.²⁶⁶

263 E.J. Pratt, "A Prairie Sunset", p.223.

264 Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.213.

265 Ibid., "A Prairie Sunset", p.223.

266 Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.161.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

138

In this case "the clouds rode high",²⁶⁷ though "the wind remained",²⁶⁸ and the terrible darkness that has hitherto engulfed the sinking "Antinoe" is lifting.

In another image the clouds are likened to smoke that climbed and broke in the upper atmosphere.

The steamer's columned smoke
Climbed like extensions of her funnels high
Into the upper zones, then warped and broke
Through the resistance of her speed.^{267A}

The poet sometimes gives to his cloud imagery a figurative meaning as in the case when at the end of life the clouds of strife and doubt and unbelief lift and we get a glimpse of "a belated spring":

Then through a rift
In the storm-cloud's eddying,
A grayness as of drift
Of winter snow in a belated spring.^{268A}

And in the same poem we find another cloud image which conveys the spiritual significance that the "eternal light"²⁶⁹ shall shine the brighter if borne on the backs of the clouds of earthly turmoil that has been endured with the right spirit.

A light shot through the narrow cleft,
And shattered into hurrying gleams that rode
Upon the backs of clouds, and through deep hollows,
Like couriers with weird, prophetic code.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁷ E.J. Pratt, "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.161.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.161.

^{267A} Ibid., "The Titanic", p.104.

^{268A} Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.217.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.217.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.219.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

139

It is to be noted that rarely does Pratt emphasize the beneficence of the clouds, he does not remind his readers that they re-clothe the lawns with verdure, revive the woods, or refresh the thirsty flower. Clouds for this writer in the natural as well as in the supernatural sense are far more often heavy with the menace of storm:

Nor the feel of air
Returning with its drizzled weight of cloud.²⁷¹

and again when we find:

The very clouds at night to John of the Cross
Being cruciform.²⁷²

He sometimes in metaphor compares the birds to clouds that are almost omens of disaster:

So long after she passed from landmen's sight,
They watched her with their Mother Carey eyes

Through clouds of sea-gulls following with
their cries.²⁷³

Mist and Vapor and Fog

In the poetry of Pratt mist like clouds seems to obscure the light and joy, it seems a hinderance to the real adventures of life and when the mist lifts we get a glimpse of the actuality of adventure:

²⁷¹ E.J. Pratt, "The Iron Door", p.220.

²⁷² Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.37.

²⁷³ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.101.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

140

Skylines unknown to maps
 Broke from the mists,
 And there was laughter on the seas.²⁷⁴

The poet whose boyhood and youth was spent beside the Atlantic, and who so often saw the floating wrecks drift to shore, knew well the subtle danger of the fog. This danger is not one that can be reckoned with or whose power can be calculated. It steals "in on us like a foot-pad", we do not know the source of this unknown danger, hence we cannot trace it to its origin: "Somewhere out of the sea and air." When the fog reaches us it has already met and plundered other prey, "Heavy with rifling Polaris, and the Seven Stars".²⁷⁵

At once the fog begins with murderous intent to overcome a new enemy. "It left our eyes untouched but took our sight", and not satisfied with any half-way measures "and then silently, it drew the song from our throats, and the supple bend from our ash-blades"; having wrought so much havoc we may class the fog in its rightful class: "For the bandit with occult fingering,/ Had tangled up/ the four threads of the compass/, and fouled the snarl around our dory."²⁷⁶

But the poet does not leave his reader with only gloomy thoughts concerning the fog. In imagery that is almost military he portrays its beneficial qualities:

²⁷⁴ E.J. Pratt, "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.36.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., "The Fog", p.186.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., "The Fog", p.186.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

141

The blessed fog -
 Ever before this day the enemy,
 Leagued with the quicksands and the breakers -

But now shamelessly betraying its allegiance and:

Mercifully masking the periscope lenses

Soothing the surf,
 Allaying the lop of the swell.²⁷⁷

and once more saving the British forces, this time in Dunkirk achievement.

In another poem the author shows that in time of fog and mist a certain silence seems to envelop the land, almost a calmness that may be pregnant of great happenings for weal or for woe:

There isn't a cry from the gathering dusk,
 There isn't a stir in the mist;
 The fog has scarfed the moon and the clouds,
 The curtains are drawn on the tides.²⁷⁸

In an hour of perfect peace such as is portrayed here the radio first spoke "out of the void" and

A slight turn of a dial,
 And night and space and the silence
 Thronged and tongued with life.²⁷⁹

In a figurative image fog and wind league together to point out that the worries and strife, the cares and the woes of life are but transient:

²⁷⁷ E.J. Pratt, "Dunkirk", pp.10-11.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., "The Radio in the Ivory Tower", p.11.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., "The Radio in the Ivory Tower", p.12.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

142

The fog closed in upon the spur,
 The moving hull became a rock
 Beneath the undulations, and the shock
 Of winds from an unknown compass point cut short
 The seaman's challenge.²⁸⁰

Wind

The wind images have a more positive meaning. The winds may bring devastation, "they may rage", "They may close up all human thoroughfares" or "they may toll", but always we are sure of the intent. When the ship, whose birthright was the sea, swept down the bay to the skirl of merry pipers.

----- the rising gale
 Sounded a challenge to her maiden sail.²⁸¹

At times the very winds which bring destruction are but the instruments of God, which replace a greater danger:

Before the winds of God had learned to strew
 His harvest sweepings on a winter sea
 To feed the primal hungers of a reef.²⁸²

In another poem the author shows the relentless power of the wind which, although the door is "double-latched" and the "roof sound" finds a way to enter and steal "the light from the trimmed wick"; and the warmth from the tamarack":

Nor will the battery of those surges keep
 The hammering pulses silent in my sleep.²⁸³

280 E.J. Pratt, "The Iron Door", p.215.

281 Ibid., "The Ritual", p.202.

282 Ibid., "The Ground Swell", p.200.

283 Ibid., "The Weather Glass", p.201.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

143

The wind is without pity, it strikes without warning
and acts in collaboration with the snow and the night to
outwit man.

But the notes
Of our warning were lost as a fierce gust of snow
Eddied and strangled the words in our throats.²⁸⁴

The great power of the winds may be caught and sub-
dued in the tolling of the bells "which salute the frozen
bodies that the ship brought in":

Out from the belfries of the town there swung
Great notes that held the winds and the pagan roll
Of open seas within their measured toll,
Only the bells slow ocean tones, that rose
And hushed upon the air, knew how to tongue
That Iliad of Death upon the floes.²⁸⁵

In this imagery the winds are held in prayerful
submission, silent, and awed at the havoc it has wrought.
The "Iliad of Death" tells the story with epic strength.

At times the images are not so well drawn out and
all that we know is that "the north-east wind had veered off-
shore" and that "the gale was driving ahead a thickening wall
of snow" and that the benighted men hoped "to run with the
wind on their shoulder as it was the only clue that the night
had left."²⁸⁶

²⁸⁴ E.J. Pratt, "The Ice-Floes", p.197.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., "Toll of the Bells", p.199.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., "The Ice-Floes", p.197.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

144

The wind is not however always the enemy of the unfortunate, from the stricken on the Dunkirk cliffs the wind carried the appeal for help:

A call came from the Channel
Like the wash of surf on sand,
Borne in by the winds against the chalk
escarpments.²⁸⁷

The poet tells of the winds that blow over his beloved Newfoundland. They do not blow in rage but "with familiar breath" and "resonant with hopes of spring":

Here the winds blow,
And here they die,
Not with that wild exotic rage
That vainly sweeps untrodden shores,
But with familiar breath
Holding a partnership with life,
Resonant with the hopes of spring
Pungent with the airs of harvest.
They call with the silver fifes of the sea,
They breathe with the lungs of men,
They are one with the tides of the sea,
They are one with the tides of the heart.²⁸⁸

The poet never seems to tire of giving us beautiful pictures of his native province. He has seen nature there in its harshest moods. He has witnessed wrecks and storms and disaster. But after describing in vivid coloring the clashes of tides and tolling of bells, the poet cannot refrain from interjecting an image such as "They (the winds) are one with the tides of the heart." The winds that sweep over Newfoundland are not yet tainted with industrialized existence "they

²⁸⁷ E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.1.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., "Newfoundland", p.165.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

145

are resonant with hopes of spring" and "pungent with airs of harvest". The tides of the hearts of the Newfoundland folk ebb and flow with values that endure with faith and trust and optimism.

Seldom does Pratt more efficaciously reveal his sensitivity to sounds in nature than when he tells the reader that the wind sweeps, rages, breathes, answers, veers off the shore, boxes the compass vane, smites the snowy cordon, truncated day between two walls of night, and strums windy discords.²⁸⁹

The poet's symbolic uses of wind images are not numerous but in the following image a crusading call is heard:

The winds of God are blowing over France,
Kindling the hearths and altars, changing vows
Of rote into an alphabet of flame.²⁹⁰

More often however the story is of the storm and anguish of the heart, or the storm of life, these are the winds he unceremoniously ushers in:

For every wind that raged upon the land
Had fled the nescient hollow of God's hand.²⁹¹

289 E.J. Pratt, Collected Poems.

290 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.36.

291 Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.218.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

146

Hills, Mountains and Volcanoes

In hill and mountain imagery Pratt finds a certain colossal grandeur. At one time a ridge of mountains seems to him to straggle along a seacoast like a Valkyrian caravan containing Odin's handmaidens who watched over the battlefield and chose those who were to be slain and conducted to Valhalla:

One half a continental span
The Aralasian mountains lay;
Like a Valkyrian caravan
At rest along the Aryan Way.²⁹²

At another time in the same poem the imagery carries a sinister implication - the mountains despite their grand protecting power become scaffolds which cause death to the unwary:

Over these scaffolds nothing passed
But navigators of the sky;
Those crags were taken only by
The sun and moon and the wind's blast,
By clouds and by the eagle's wings
Out on their furthest venturings.²⁹³

The poet with artistic skill touches the verdure of the mountains with delicate tints, he would as it were lift these uplands from the atmosphere of gloom in which the last image has placed them and show his readers the rose flush of the sun touching the capping peaks of snow:

²⁹² E.J. Pratt, "The Fable of the Goats", p.289.

²⁹³ Ibid., "The Fable of the Goats", p.290.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

147

On one crisp morning when the heights
 Were diamond brilliant with their snows,
 When Dawn had flushed with a deep rose
 The panels of the Dalomites

 A common inspiration struck
 Concurrently each monarch buck.²⁹⁴

These Dalomite splendours had been formed by nature
 in its slow but intermittent labour, with Time as the master
 craftsman:

Both avalanch and cataract
 With Time compounding had attacked
 The lowest of the Dalomites,
 With spring's recurrent cannonade;
 Had deepened crater and crevasse,
 Torn down the gorges and had laid
 The canyon of Saint Barnabas.²⁹⁵

But strife is never absent from life and even in such
 naturalistic glory the pagan element of battle is found.

The middle section of this range
 For endless centuries had been
 Earth's most dramatic mise en scène
 For lawless intermediate fights.²⁹⁶

The mountains may be an amphitheatre the stage settings
 of which are the curtains of the clouds which form a far more
 artistic procenium-arch than any valley-architecture could
 supply.

294 E.J. Pratt, "The Fable of the Goats", p.296.

295 Ibid., "The Fable of the Goats", p.287.

296 Ibid., "The Fable of the Goats", p.290.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

148

An amphitheatre that held
 Valleys and cliffs and waterfalls,
 Gorges hewn like royal halls,
 Forests flanked by hills that swelled
 To mountains, these again to clouds
 From peaks of ice.²⁹⁷

In these imagistic stanzas the poet has underscored the visual element. The mountains are glorious, whether they are presented as "caravan" as "amphitheatre" as "scaffold" or as "battlefield". But the poet also wishes to stress the auditory image of the mountain. He wishes to show the mountain brought to life by the mighty volcano pulsing in its depths which must erupt and bring havoc and ruin. In other words the struggle that Pratt constantly portrays is also found in the mountain scenery. To do this most effectively he makes the volcanic convulsions contribute to animal imagery, brought to birth amid "volcanic throes":

And when the drifting years had sighted land,
 And hills and plains declared their birth
 Amid volcanic throes.²⁹⁸

In another poem the animal is delivered upon earth and forebodes tragedy and disaster:

297 E.J. Pratt, "The Fable of the Goats", p.290.

298 Ibid., "The Highway", p.228.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

149

Stretching from the waterline
 By gentle slope and sharp incline,
 Past many an undulating plain,
 The land ran southward to a chain
 Of heavy-wooded hills and rose

 Soaring aloft to where the snows

 Were blackened by the brooding dread
 Outline, of a volcano's head.²⁹⁹

In this image the reader is given a mere hint of animal intensity, there will be war and devastation caused by the beast instinct of the animal whose head has emerged. But in the following image the heart filled with hate and revenge prompts the almost satanic acts that the volcano will perpetrate. The imagery almost passes the sensuous level and enters that of the emotional:

Just as the last convulsive stroke
 Unthrottled the volcano's heart,--
 The storm flood of the lava broke.
 It shot a fifteen thousand feet
 Straight to the sky, then billowing higher,
 And outward, made as if to meet
 Its own maternal stellar fire,
 With tenuous play of finger streaks;
 But failing in its vaulted leap
 Returned with frenzied haste to sweep
 Across the Guadelera peaks;
 Inundate the valleys; glut
 The plains and canyons; rise and shut
 The higher gorges, rifts and caves
 Of mountains;
 Overflow and roll
 Seaward with tumbling lava waves
 Over the great Juranian bowl.³⁰⁰

299 E.J. Pratt, "The Great Feud", p.257.

300 Ibid., "The Great Feud", p.287.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

150

The ferocious volcano-animal is not only formed and born; given a head to plan the destruction, and a heart to feed the hatred; but it is also given a name. The animal is dragon in form and breathes out fire to guard a coastline against all intruders:

Her slanting forehead ancient-scarred,
And breathing through her smoky maw,
Lay like a dragon left to guard
The Isthmian Scarps, against the climb
Of life.³⁰¹

Not only upon living forms will this giant monster, now become a fire of hate, take revenge, its giant power extends also to the dead:

It blazed the forest pines, and passed
The northern stretch of cliffs, until
Clearing the summit and the last
Excoriated ridge and hill,
It poured its fury on the dead.³⁰²

Then lest a few "living remnants" should flee its power and seek a merciful oblivion in the sea the volcano pursues relentlessly:

Then the inexorable blast,
Capping the horrors of the night
Pursued the living remnants, bled
To the final pulses with the fight.
And caught them as they tried to flee
To the drowning mercies of the sea.³⁰³

301 E.J. Pratt, "The Great Feud", p.257.

302 Ibid., "The Great Feud", pp.287-288.

303 Ibid., "The Great Feud", p.283.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

151

This dragon imagery is extended. It is humbly offered by the writer of the thesis for your consideration.

Robin Skelton, whose potent voice has given to our day scholarly explanations of the different forms that imagery may take, validifies the use of the extended image in The Poetic Pattern:

The imagery is given an apparent independence within the poem, the appeal of the verse is to the ingeniously minded reader who enjoys seeing an apparently non-moral or non-didactic scene analysed in moral and didactic terms. The images can thus give an impression of being as it were, the true masters of the poem, the true elements of the pattern; although they are based firmly upon a system of concepts or ideas with which they are by implication identified or compared, they remain as a "concealed" factor in the make-up of the poem.³⁰⁴

Sunlight, Starlight, Dawn and Dusk

In visual imagery the sun for Pratt paints rainbow tints as it frolics with the waves:

----- the running seas
Cascaded, while the morning sun
Rising in gold and beryl, spun
Over the cachalot's steaming gloss
And from the foam a fiery floss
Of multitudinous fashionings.³⁰⁵

Sometimes Pratt is downcast as he gazes at the setting sun, when he sees not in it the glory of its colour, or rest and quiet, or the promise of another day, but the end of

³⁰⁴ Robin Skelton, "The Poetic Image", in The Poetic Pattern, p.98.

³⁰⁵ E.J. Pratt, "The Cachalot", p.173.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

152

things, old age, storms to come, sorrow, dangers and the approach of night. This attitude is especially to be noted when he speaks of the sun and the sea - a combination that prompt long, long, thoughts. It is concisely summed up in "Sea Variations":

Old, old is the sea to-day
 A sudden stealth of age
 Has torn away
 The texture of its youth and grace,
 And filched the rose of daybreak from its waters.

 Though yesterday,
 Blue-eyed and shadowless as a child's face
 It held the promise of luminous dawn;
 Though through its merry after-hours
 It bade the sun to pour
 Its flaming mintage on the ocean floor
 That by conjuror's touch was turned
 To rarer treasure manifold,
 Where jacinth, emerald and sapphire burned --
 A fringe around a core of gold ---
 Old, old is the sea to-day
 Forsaken, chill and grey,
 And banished is the glory of its waters.³⁰⁶

In imagery that is a contrast in effect, the warm sun brings a flow of health and strength and vitality and spirituality to a loved one whose palid features proclaim "life's foreshortened days".

And yet to-day I watched your pale face yearning,
 When the sun's warmth poured through the open door,
 And something molten in your soul was burning
 Memorial raptures life could not restore.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁶ E.J. Pratt, "Sea Variations" in Canadian Poets, John Garvin (Editor) Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1926, p. 471.

³⁰⁷ Op. cit., "Old Age", p. 227.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

153

The sun is also considered in imagery as being a valiant warrior in whom the "white heat" of action can accomplish superhuman feats:

Such acts of valour as were done
Outshone the white flame of the sun.³⁰⁸

Frequently the visual effect of rainbow colors result in poems that tell of the sun and the sea:

Curled crests caught the spectrum from the sun.³⁰⁹

The sun is also a rider driving the earth in its natural course along the racetrack orbit:

The earth responds to the whip of the sun
Directing its pace and its orbit.³¹⁰

In imagery of precious gems ocean-and-sea power results in "fiery mist":

And the sun who wrought
Cascades and rainbows; flung them in festoons
Over the spires, with emerald, amethyst,
Sapphire and pearl out of their fiery mist.³¹¹

The sun is an alchemist draining the heavenly colors and an architect building heavenly structures or massing golden troops to storm a "city in the skies":

308 E.J. Pratt, "The Great Feud", p.281.

309 Ibid., "Sea-Gulls", p.188.

310 Ibid., "The Radio in the Ivory Tower", p.12.

311 Ibid., "The Sea-Cathedral", p.211.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

154

What alchemist could in one hour so drain
 The rainbow of its colours, smelt the ore
 From the September lodes of heaven, to pour
 This Orient magic on a Western plain,
 And build the miracle before our eyes
 Of castellated heights and colonnades,
 Carraran palaces, and cavalcades
 Trooping through a city in the skies.³¹²

Occasionally the spiritual meaning of the setting
 sun comes to surface:

The amber clouds touched by armorial red,
 By thrones dissolving, and by spirals hurled
 From golden plinths, announcing to the world
 That Day, for all its blazonry was dead.³¹³

Thus life in terms of the sun becomes for Pratt one
 short day that at dusk must wane - it may go out in a blaze
 of glory - or the fog and mist may obscure even its latter
 hours, but it never sinks beyond the horizon leaving the
 world without hope.

Moon Images

The moon images found in the poetry convey a feeling
 of placidity and calmness, although they tell of sorrow more
 than of joy. The waning moon appeals particularly to the
 poet, and he frequently notes the effect of the moon on the
 tides and then through the tides upon the lives, spiritually
 and physically as well as economically, of the people: The

³¹² E.J. Pratt, "A Prairie Sunset", p.223.

³¹³ Ibid., "A Prairie Sunset", p.223.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

155

waters around the Newfoundland shores the poet tells us are not merely:

Moon-driven through a timeless circuit.
But with the lusty stroke of life
That they might run within
The sluices of men's hearts.³¹⁴

In another image the sea lies in death like a Pontiff while the moon-tapers keep their silent vigil:

How like a Pontiff thou dost lie at last
Impassive, robed at Death's high-unctioned hour
With those grey vestments that the storm,
In the dread legacy of its power,
Around thy level form
Majestically has cast, -
In the pale light of the moon's slow tapers burning.³¹⁵

The eclipse of the moon is exemplified in animal or in bird imagery:

A moon eclipse was due - Brebeuf had known it -
Had told the Indians of the moment when
The shadow would be thrown across the face.
Nor was there wastage in the prayers as night,
Uncurtained by a single cloud, produced
An orb most perfect. No one knew the lair
Or nest from which the shadow came; no one
The home to which it travelled when it passed.³¹⁶

When danger is imminent, and death advances with "A low insistent note"; the poet then tells us that a "red moon is rising".³¹⁷

Hope is the message that the poet conveys with

³¹⁴ E.J. Pratt, "Newfoundland", p.165.

³¹⁵ Ibid., "Sea Variations", p.461.

³¹⁶ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.50.

³¹⁷ Ibid., "The Ground Swell", p.200.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

156

starlight. The stars twinkle in "Flawless horizon; crystal atmosphere".³¹⁸ and again:

The starlight and the low wash of the sea
Against the hull bore the serenity
Of sleep at rural hearths.³¹⁹

In "Brebeuf and His Brethren" we are told that the Fathers can forget life's sorrow and care when beneath the stars they seek the help of God.

Then the Fathers sought
The balm that never failed. Under the stars,
Along an incandescent avenue
The visioned trembled, tender, placid, pure.³²⁰

In figurative imagery the gloom of uncertainty and doubt that separates the now from the hereafter is lifted for a second when a star-burst reveals a glimmer of hope:

Then with intermittent lull
Of wind and the dull
Break of transitory light,
Where rents in the shawl of darkness
Revealed star-bursts and clouds in flight.³²¹

Hope again comes back to benighted land, the bittern's cry is replaced by gleam of the star:

The skies that had banked their fires,
Are shining again with the stars.³²²

The following double image of moon and star will serve to show the analogy which Pratt frequently employed to

³¹⁸ E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.104.

³¹⁹ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.103.

³²⁰ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.67.

³²¹ Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.213.

³²² Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.94.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

157

show that the moon symbolizes the decline of life whereas the star is the hope image the "light-after-darkness" symbol:

Though through the silent tenure of the night
It bade the sterile moon to multiply
A thousand-fold its undivided light,
Within the nadir of a richer sky;
When every star a thousand cressets glowed
That, caught in wider conflagration, sent
Vast leagues of silver fire wherever flowed
The waters of its shareless firmament.³²³

The dawn imagery like the starlight imagery gleams with hope. It is bright and joyful:

Had dawn
This very day, not flung her surplices
Around the headlands and with golden fire
Consumed the silken argosies that made
For Rouen from the estuary of the Seine.³²⁴

The happiest dream that the priest can have in this danger filled New France is that of his Homeland clad in the surplices of dawn.

Even when the hope symbol is submerged there is still found calmness and silence:

In the hush
Of the laggard hours, as the flush
Of dawn burn out the coppery tones
That smeared the unfamiliar west.³²⁵

When the poet wants to picture sorrow, he takes care to state that the happening took place before dawn; the ship

³²³ E.J. Pratt, "Sea Variations", p.471.

³²⁴ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.91.

³²⁵ Ibid., "The Great Feud", p.289.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

158

that joyfully set sail "under according skies," met with disaster:

She left her name under revolted skies
Before the break of day.³²⁶

There is an almost exultant note of the success of contest in this dawn image:

The day was ours and our pulses stirred
In that brisk live hour before the sun,
At the thought of the load and the sweepstake won.³²⁷

And in combination with this conquering imagery the poet adds his favourite visual imagery of colour:

The morning outrolled
On the fields its tissue of orange and gold,
And lit up the ice to the north in the sharp,
Clear air.³²⁸

Old age comes as a plunderer and despoils its prey of the light and the laughter of youthful days:

So poor again -- with all that plunder taken;
Your mountain stride, your eagle vision, gone!
And the "All Hail" of your voice in a world forsaken
Of song and curving wings and the laughter of dawn.³²⁹

In the poetry of Pratt there is one example of a dawn image whose connotation is not hope but despair. The image is offered here that the reader may see the contrast and thereby be enabled to subscribe more readily to the claim of brightness, and laughter, and joy, and gladness that are contained

326 E.J. Pratt, "The Ritual", p.202.

327 Ibid., "The Ice-Floes", p.195.

328 Ibid., "The Ice-Floes", p.195.

329 Ibid., "Old Age", p.226.

THE SENSUOUS ELEMENT

159

in the other images. A hundred hours had passed since the Antinoe sent out her call for help. Each day the prospect of rescue was growing fainter:

----- the slow
 Unreasoned alteration of the sleet
 With hurrying phantoms of the hail and snow,
 The same rotation on the deck -- the grey
 Sterility of hope with each life-boat gone,
 Dusk followed by the night, and every dawn
 A slattern offering dust instead of day.³³⁰

Professor Spurgeon believes that a study of images enables the reader to know the poet better:

Such a study enables us to get nearer to the poet himself. It throws light from a fresh angle upon his imaginative and pictorial vision.

and she later continues:

They (the images) are not selected to point out or to illustrate any preconceived idea or thesis, but they are studied, either as a whole, or in groups, with a perfectly open mind, to see what information they yield.³³¹

With Professor Spurgeon, the writer of this thesis, has also striven to make an objective study of the imagery found in the poetry of Pratt, the findings are presented here to the reader for consideration, that thereby the poetry and the poet may be better known and better understood.

³³⁰ E.J. Pratt, "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.

³³¹ Caroline Spurgeon, op.cit., p.x.

CHAPTER THREE

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

Professor Caroline F.E. Spurgeon in her study of Shakespeare's imagery has called the image.

A little word-picture used by a poet or a prose writer to illustrate, illumine and embellish his thought. It is a description or an idea, which by comparison or analogy, stated or understood, with something else, transmits to us through the emotions and associations it arouses, something of the "wholeness", the depth, and the richness, of the way the writer views, conceives or has felt what he is telling us.¹

The image, therefore, gives quality, creates atmosphere, and conveys emotion in a way that no specific or precise description, however clear or accurate, can do. The emotional element of the image plays an important, a supremely significant part in the poetic pattern.

In spite of the contention that was made on an earlier page of the thesis, that the purpose of this study is not primarily to delve into and analyze the author's personality, or to investigate his life-story; yet, by its very nature, the study of imagery must, on the one hand, reveal the poet's dream; and on the other, show forth the markings of the mind in which the image was molded. These markings may be but the faintest of tracery yet they are likely to be revealing.

¹ Caroline F.E. Spurgeon, op.cit., pp.ix-x.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

162

The sensuous element of the image leans so heavily upon the exterior world by which it has been tinted that it becomes more and more objective--almost like a file in which is hoarded past experiences, present analogies, and future aspirations.

Far more subjective is the emotional element of the image. If it be true that by his imagery the poet invites the reader to share the deepest feelings of his nature, and to view the hidden recesses of his soul--and many students of imagery subscribe to this claim for imagery--then, most surely, it is by way of the emotional element that the invitation is issued and also by way of the emotions that the reader accepts it. Henry Van Dyke has told us that:

The glory of our life below
Comes not from what we do or what we know;
But dwells forevermore in what we are.²

The world and the men in it are full of glad or sad surprises; yet the surprises do not come from the things that are part and parcel of either men or things. If we know man's humanity, we know all of it and there is no room for surprise. But a glimpse of the truth that is in him, a momentary contact with his goodness, a recognition of his nobility, a glance at his spiritual yearnings; even an insight, be it ever so brief, of the constricting, and paralyzing doubts or the negative, debasing and blinding fears that temper his ardour or quench his hope, this glimpse makes up the surprise

² Henry Van Dyke, Counsels by the Way, New York, Thomas Y. Crowell, 1908, p. 46.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

162

and then colours it with the promise of joy or the presentiment of sorrow. Among the facts that are significant in the study of a poet's deeper thoughts, there are perhaps none of more profound import than his conceptions of life and death, good and evil, love and hate and fear.

This chapter will be a study of these abstractions as they are revealed in the poetic imagery of Pratt's poetry. They promise the heart and the mind of both the poet and the reader long journeys and rich rewards, treasures beyond the capacities of any counting-room. For the emotions of man have no fence about them; traces of them shining forth from the limited things of the world are allurements of minute facets which reflect, either negatively or positively the vast infinity.

Life

In common with a score of other writers Pratt pictures life as a highway leading to the City of God:

But what made our feet miss the road that brought
The world to such a golden trove?³

In such expressions as: "He had contrived to start you on a race"; and "Your heart was lured beyond the window sill"; the poet conceives of life as a sport or a game, or almost a contest of happy childhood. At other times life may be a

³ E.J. Pratt, "The Highway", p.229.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

163

cottage;⁴ a path;⁵ a journey;⁶ a port;⁷ a pilgrimage;⁸ or a river;⁹ and at another time the poet equates life with time:

Time -- Days, weeks of the balance of life
Offered in exchange for minutes now.¹⁰

When life seemed nearing the horizon, when Death seemed hovering near to the soldiers on the Dunkirk drifts, then all the remainder of life, in the ordinary course of human events, decreases in value so that its exchange would be but minutes, minutes that would be freighted with the hope of security.

Life is a ceaseless warfare. We have an archenemy who continuously labours to destroy us.

Death was sweating at his lath.¹¹

In another image the brevity of life's span is likened to the passage of a single hour:

Life's three score years and ten
Were measured by a single hour.¹²

With the imagery of convention Pratt speaks of those "who have tasted life"; and of "life as a wager": or "a stranger at his side whom he had staked his life for".¹³

4 E.J. Pratt, "The Radio in the Ivory Tower", p.15.

5 Ibid., "From Stone to Steel", p.20.

6 Ibid., "The Epigrapher", p.235.

7 Ibid., "Sea Variations", p.473.

8 Ibid., "The Depression Ends", p.305.

9 Ibid., "The Epigrapher", p.235.

10 Ibid., "Dunkirk", p.4.

11 Ibid., "Dunkirk", p.10.

12 Ibid., "Dunkirk", p.8.

13 Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.216.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

164

When the Indians by calculated delay prolong the life of Brebeuf that they may witness with delight the heroic sufferings of the priest then Pratt speaks of life as an exit or a door through which one might slip to security and endless peace:

In such delays which might have been construed
By lesser wills as exits of escape,
As providential doors upon a light latch.¹⁴

In another poem when the poet speaks of the seemingly marvellous but finite contraptions of time. Life by comparison shrinks for him to the dimensions of a cloister cell from which one might view Infinity:

This is the cloister of the world
Reduced to a cell in the fortress of peace
In the midst of anonymous, infinite darkness.¹⁵

In the image "silence is thronged and tongued with life",¹⁶ the poet thinks of life as an animal, or as having animal malice, and power to hurt. In another poem man must play with accuracy the white keys on a musical scale of life:

The operator felt someone was rapping
A message out with white intensity
In life-death finger action on a key.¹⁷

In a cosmic picture of life, tinged with darkest colours, Pratt would tell the reader that just as life is the principle of activity in man, so the habits, good or evil, that man

¹⁴ E.J. Pratt, "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.47.

¹⁵ Ibid., "The Radio in the Ivory Tower", p.12.

¹⁶ Ibid., "The Radio in the Ivory Tower", p.14.

¹⁷ Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.142.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

165

builds within himself are also principles from which flow the actions that give distinctive colour to each man's living.

In "The Truant" man's habits and the kinship with the Divinity have rendered him secure in this atomic age of crumbling values, man will not submit to Relentless Power:

This creature -----
Walks with tangential step unknown
Within the weave of the atomic pattern.¹⁸

In another poem the author speaks of the sea as playing a multitude of roles in the life of man, as though that life were a masquerade:

What masks has thou not worn
What parts not played,
Thou Prince of all the Revels
In Life's Masquerade?¹⁹

Life is water: "A fugitive on the desert sands a moment broods o'er the life he spilt,";²⁰ life is a city besieged by Death: "Caught by the 'Avenger' near the City Gates".²¹ To pagan minds life is without purpose, it is a mere compound wherein comic irony waters down serious intent. The priests, therefore, arm themselves with fortitude, and steel their hearts against the tortures foreshadowed:

And what forebodings of the days to come,
As he beheld this weird compound of life
In jest and intent taking place before his eyes.²²

¹⁸ E.J. Pratt, "The Truant", p.309.

¹⁹ Ibid., "Sea Variations", p.472.

²⁰ Ibid., "Sea Variations", p.472.

²¹ Ibid., "Sea Variations", p.474.

²² Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.54.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

166

Life is a mansion, the doors of which are opened by the keys
of Time:

A set of golden keys
Closing all doors of Life,
Fitting the wards of Death.²³

The life of an infant who lived but a short hour is measured
by a pulse, as though it were but a feeble heart-beat:

Nor shall its sleeping heart, grown cold
After a pulse of life, unfold
That futile challenge.²⁴

The poet, disturbed by the useless waste of the lifeblood of
youth on the fields of war gives the reader the image of life
as disease and expresses the desire that this canker will
infect the leaf and stem of any plant that may come to exis-
tence watered by the blood spilt on the "Invaded Field":

Now if some briar should here be born,
Let life infect both leaf and flower.²⁵

In a magnificent ode written on the occasion of his mother's
death, life is a door to be swung once and then closed for-
evermore. Some readers might consider this door, as the door
of death; I prefer to think of it as the door of life --
Life Everlasting:

²³ E.J. Pratt, "The Radio in the Ivory Tower", p.15.

²⁴ Ibid., "One Hour of Life", p.203.

²⁵ Ibid., "The Invaded Field", p.20.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

167

A giant hand had wrought it cruciform
 And placed deep shadows on the sunken panels,
 Then in ironic jest
 Had carven out a crest
 Of death upon the lintel.

 I saw no latch or knocker on the door,
 It seemed the smith designed it to be swung
 But once, then closed forever more.²⁶

If the poet had meant this to be the door of death, he would not have used the words "ironic jest". Then again the door is "cruciform", and this is not the sign of death but of "Death conquered"; it is the sign of Eternal Life.

By his varied comparisons of life with the most ordinary and everyday commodities that surround us the poet seems to be striving to intimate that man has become blinded by the routine of time. We take even splendid actions and deeds for granted, we dismiss them without thought as being trivial or prosaic. The poet seems to be trying to tell us that we miss the splendor of men through that same blindness to the obvious that allows us to take the grass and the trees and the sun, and indeed all the glories of nature, as well as love and life for granted. The poet would teach by his constant references to the glories of life hidden beneath the humdrum of necessity, that human splendor is a living splendor. By that fact we are set apart from the stones and mud and clouds and mountains, splendid as all these are; by that fact

²⁶ E.J. Pratt, "The Iron Door", p.212.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

168

we join ranks with all the living--from the least plant through to the highest angel, to Life unlimited in whom is all life. A dead plant, a dead animal, a dead man are all things whose inner spark of life has been extinguished, the splendor is gone, and only memory gives some dignity to the burnt out ashes of life; but man has additional glory, in man there is human splendor, our souls are fundamentally independent of the corporeal world which they dominate. This truth, held by the poet, is beautifully and poetically expressed and frequently, endorsed by many poetic thoughts:

I am glad, that you placed "Brebeuf" at the top, as it is my favourite, for the story took hold of my soul. It has always been my belief that a life without a faith is the most miserable form of existence imaginable.²⁷

In a sincere tribute to a beloved student, a college athlete, who died in the prime of life--whom God hailed back when the race of life had just been started, this beautiful warm faith in the Divine Wisdom of the Referee is expressed, and the reader is left with the assurance that though weakness might prompt a challenge, yet the author knows that even the shortest life, be it lived with purpose and sincerity, is not futile; and that what may seem to the unthinking to be an interrupted career, is to those who believe but the beginning of "an immortal course ahead"--the human splendor shining through brings conviction of the goal:

²⁷ E.J. Pratt, unpublished letter, dated July 10, 1956.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

169

----- He had contrived, instead,
 To start you on a race,
 With an immortal course ahead,
 And daybreak on your face.²⁸

To Pratt life is a field for the realization of human purpose, and life finds its meaning in our efforts to brighten the lives of other pilgrims more burdened than ourselves. Sometimes we may catch glimpses of this vision of the author in brief image-expressions dropped as it were by chance: "he had staked his life";²⁹ "barter of life for life", done with "the grace of a Castilian courtesy";³⁰ "swiftly took her fate with open hands";³¹ "he gave his place to a Magyar woman and her child";³² "in those high moments when the gambler tossed upon the chance and uncomplaining lost",³³ and in another poem the same "life for a life" motif is also seen: "the sailors took their chance with each spent wave";³⁴ "the ship with unremitting search despite the chances stacked against her",³⁵ and all these semi-submerged image fragments are summed up in an unmistakable purpose:

-----in fine, to run a race
 For a crew's life with the storm laps in advance.³⁶

28 E.J. Pratt, "The Decision", p.228.

29 Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.216.

30 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.123.

31 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.123.

32 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.123.

33 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.123.

34 Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.142.

35 Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.144.

36 Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.146.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

170

At the beginning of the thesis the belief was expressed that for Pratt life seemed to be a struggle, which if nobly fought would end in a glorious conquest--this present chapter but endorses that. One fact is ever present to the mind of the poet and it is the non-static quality of life. We are not at rest; we are on a journey. Our life is not a mere fact; it is a movement, a tendency, a steady, ceaseless progress towards an unseen goal. We are gaining something, or losing something, everyday. Even when our position and our character seem to remain precisely the same, they are changing. For the mere advance of time is a change. Everything we do is a step in one direction or another. Even the failure to do something is in itself a deed. It sets us forward or backward. Pratt the lover of the waves and of the sea in all its moods would tell us that to-day we are nearer the port than we were yesterday; for since our ship was first launched upon the sea of life, we have never been still for a single moment; the sea is too deep; we could not find anchorage even if we would; there can be no pause until the final port. All this the poet tells most vividly in his imagery of life, in his building of an empire: "upon the pulses, where even the sun and moon and stars revolved around a Life and a redemptive Death."³⁷

37 E.J. Pratt, "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.81.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

171

Death

Even a glance at Pratt's images of life gives some clue as to what we may expect when we consider the opposite.

Thus life is a voyage, uncertain, and bound in shallows and miseries; a journey, a pilgrimage; death is the journey's end, sometimes a shipwreck, more times a haven, or a port. Life is a candle, a lamp or a fire, death is the extinction of all these. Life is a spring flower, death is a frost; life is a prison, death is a release.

In general it would seem that Pratt does not rebel against death, but accepts its natural process as a debt we owe to God, the cancelling of the bond of life; he thinks of it sometimes as the end of all we are sure of, almost as the beginning of a mystery; sometimes coming abruptly and harshly, but most often as an end wholly peaceful, merciful and restful.

One poem is devoted entirely to the approach of death. The uncertainty of the time, but the certainty of the coming is recognized by all, Pratt takes the conventional image and expresses it in his own unique way:

However blow the winds over the pollen,
Whatever the course of the garden variables,
He remains the constant.
Ever flowering from the poppy seeds.³⁸

³⁸ E.J. Pratt, "Come, Away Death", p.17.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

172

This contemporary age "of wars and rumours of wars" has robbed death of its ceremonial approach, of its dignity, and of its solemnity:

There was a time when he came in formal dress,
Announced by Silence tapping at the panels,
In deep apology.³⁹

In earlier times when life was lived more gracefully, then death approached with chivalric leisure as though hesitant to interrupt the wayfarer:

A touch of chivalry in his approach,
He offered sacramental wine,
And with acanthus leaf
And petals of the hyacinth
He took the fever from the temples
And closed the eyelids,

Then death becomes a guide:

Then led the way to his cool longitudes,
In the dignity of the candles.⁴⁰

With the passing of the centuries this medieval grace has vanished, and death now approaches with traction-tread. Pratt would imply that man deals with death with impunity, and death in return rushes upon man without reverence, without hesitation and without ceremony:

³⁹ E.J. Pratt, "Come, Away Death", p.17.

⁴⁰ Ibid.,

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

173

His medieval grace is gone--
 Gone with the flame of the capitals,
 And the leisured turn of the thumb,
 Leafing the manuscripts.
 Gone with the marbles,
 And the venetian mosaics,
 With the bend of the knee
 Before the rose-strewn feet of the Virgin.⁴¹

In the next stanza the personal note enters. Death comes closer than the casual visitor of a classical era:

There was a moment when the storm
 Delayed its fist, when the surf fell
 Like velvet on the rocks--a moment only,
 The strangest lull we ever knew!⁴²

The poet would bear in upon the reader the poignant truth that although the ceremony and ritual that accompanied death in medieval days has now almost entirely disappeared, yet its mystery can never vanish. This mystery pervades our everyday life. One cannot become callous to death's approach. The "monologue of silence" which is the silence of Eternity is "grave and unequivocal", death will follow this awful silence:

Etched with a foreign stylus never used
 On the outmoded page of the Apocalypse.⁴³

There are other times when the poet speaks of death as a spell or a strategem, that is, something beyond the calm calculations of men. When the crew of the "Roosevelt" were vainly trying to aid the sinking "Antinoe" they bravely faced death:

41 E.J. Pratt, "Come, Away Death", p.17.

42 Ibid., "Come, Away Death", p.17.

43 Ibid., "Come, Away Death", p.17.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

174

Matching death with strategy
 The sailors took their chances with each
 Spent wave.⁴⁴

The pagan mind of the Indian associated death with the priest,
 as something unknown and therefore to be distrusted and
 feared:

-----What are these demons
 Who take such unknown postures,
 What are they but spells to make us die;
 To finish those disease had failed to kill
 Inside the cabins.⁴⁵

That which could not be comprehended was to the Indian as
 death:

Did the Indians not behold
 Death following hard upon the offered Host?⁴⁶

Whereas to the Christian mind Death was more often a haven or
 port at the end of a wearisome journey:

Jogues knew that he was travelling to his death.⁴⁷

Since for Pratt the struggle of life was of vast importance;
 it is not surprising that the ultimate struggle and the
 challenge of Death should often be stressed. When time itself
 seemed to wait upon the decision of Captain Fried whether or
 not it would be prudent to risk all to save those aboard the
 Antinoe, all lesser considerations are summed up in this most
 daring challenge:

⁴⁴ E.J. Pratt, "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.142.

⁴⁵ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.65.

⁴⁶ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.66.

⁴⁷ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.75.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

175

To outstare Death to his salt countenance
Made up the grim agenda in his face.⁴⁸

The death struggle on the sea is fierce, that beneath the sea
is even more grim:

That orgy of convulsive breath
Abhorred thing before the death,
In which the maniac threads of life
Are gathered from some wild abysm
Stranded for a final strife
Then broken in a paroxysm.⁴⁹

The "maniac threads" would imply the lack of purpose, but when
Pratt reports the human struggle the reader is able to sense
the real value that is in it:

A stranger at his side
For whom he had staked his life,
And on the daring odds had died.
No one had seen the young man go,
Or watched his plunge,
To save another whom he did not know.
Men only guessed the grimness of the struggle
The body-tug, the valour of the deed;
For both were wrapped in the same green winding-sheet,
And blood red was the colour of the weed,
That lay around their feet.⁵⁰

More than once in the poetry of Pratt the expectation of death
is accompanied by and almost equated with calm reliance or
infinite trust:

Only a calm reliance that the door
Would open and disclose
Those who by swifter strides had gone before.⁵¹

48 E.J. Pratt, "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.147.

49 Ibid., "The Cachalot", p.180.

50 Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.216.

51 Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.215.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

176

And also we find the strong confidence that those who have gone on before have reached a haven or port of safety:

In the serene belief that she could borrow
Sufficient strength out of the deep
Resources of a final sleep
To overtake the others by the morrow.⁵²

In another image the soul at death is delivered from the accumulation of life's burdens so that it may pass through the door unfettered:

The world with all its dead weight of burdens seemed
To pause before the door, in drifts of sand,
And catacombs of rock and burial turf.⁵³

Death is earth's riddle, the answer we may guess, but it is only deep faith that will give us certainty:

Now shall be read
The faded symbols of the page which keeps
This hoart riddle of the dead.⁵⁴

Life is a race, a contest, or a sport, the rules must be observed, and the score supervised by the grim Referee, Death:

With burning look and stubborn word,
Challenged the Referee,
Why he forbade you to complete
The run.⁵⁵

The poet frequently emphasizes the relentlessness, and the levelling effect of death. The comrades who could not "shoulder a load together" nor endure "the winds and weathers"

52 E.J. Pratt, "The Iron Door", p.216.

53 Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.218.

54 Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.219.

55 Ibid., "The Decision", p.28.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

177

of life without "a love consumed by a hot marl of words" are earnestly exhorted to consider that Death will render all things equal. It is the poet's way of telling the reader not to be too concerned about the trivialities of life:

Do you not know that a hemlock root
Will enfold you together,
Though fair be the sky
Or foul be the weather?
To that same bed you shall come,
When the ear shall be deaf
And the lips be dumb;
Where under the turf,
Not a note shall be heard,
From the cry of a wren
To the thunder of surf.⁵⁶

More than once the poet speaks of the power of approaching death to bring out all that is best in a man. Men whom the world respect meet death in a gallant way:

Then Tose,
The captain, who had worn his buttons well.
His bread had now returned upon the waters,
For ten years back, as later stories tell,
He had while master of another vessel,
Rescued a Philadelphian bark in seas
And winds only less full of death than these.⁵⁷

Of such a man one might expect that death danger should bring out the best, but death also has an exalting power over life's derelicts, the prison inmates display heroic and latent valour:

⁵⁶ E.J. Pratt, "Comrades", p.231.

⁵⁷ Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.160.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

178

The fires consumed their numbers with their breath,
Charred out their names; though many of the dead
Gave proof of valour, just before their death,
That Caesar's legions might have coveted.⁵⁸

Death seems to impart a strange strength that is at the same time both physical and spiritual. The youthful Indian who had received spiritual regeneration in the baptismal waters also received the strength to die a glorious death:

A youthful captive
They killed--the one who seeing me prepared
For torture interposed, offering himself
A sacrifice for me who had in bonds
Begotten him for Christ.⁵⁹

In these images we see the glorious aspects of death; at other times death may be: a shattering stroke;⁶⁰ the climax of starvation and assault;⁶¹ an exchange;⁶² a tribunal;⁶³ a consummating blow;⁶⁴ an arbitrator;⁶⁵ a ritual;⁶⁶ or a final curtain.⁶⁷ There is just one incident in which the poet points out that death is just a casual incident. Life with its horrors and hazards for the missionaries was a living martyrdom that death did not increase to any great degree, but merely climaxed:

58 E.J. Pratt, "The Convict Holocaust", p.233.

59 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.72.

60 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.59.

61 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.67.

62 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.66.

63 Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.219.

64 Ibid., "The Great Feud", p.268.

65 Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.213.

66 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.53.

67 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.58.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

179

Three brothers under vows--the Carmelite,
 The Capuchin, and his, the Jesuit.
 The gentlest of his stock, he had resolved
 To seek and to accept a post that would
 Transmit his nurture through a discipline
 That multiplied the living martyrdoms
 Before the casual incident of death.⁶⁸

Death is a pageant in a drama:

The warriors had surprised
 A band of Iroquois and had reserved
 The one survivor for a fiery pageant.⁶⁹

Or again in the same poem when the action is still further
 advanced:

Death seemed to be merely as a drama in a life's
 routine.⁷⁰

Or the poet tells us that life and death make up the matrix
 of every human being:

Yet closer than our web of life and death.⁷¹

And again the drama and pageant concept is given:

The drama was drawing to its close.⁷²

In other images nature is employed to convey a meaning of
 death, it is a darkness, a gloom, a silence, a harvest, a
 rain, a frost, or an autumn:

No cries announcing life,
 No sounds declaring death,
 And silence in the worth and struggle for life.⁷³

68 E.J. Pratt, "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.45.

69 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.53.

70 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.123.

71 Ibid., "Fire", p.96.

72 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.94.

73 Ibid., "Silences", p.117.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

180

In the "Brebeuf epic" the death of the hero is eloquently expressed in the muted completion of the full circumference of a wheel: "The wheel had come full circle."⁷⁴

In another stanza of the poem death may be heralded by musical prelude:

In the sounds of invisible trumpets blowing
Around two slabs of board,
Right-angled hammered.⁷⁵

The joyfull acceptation of death is found in the action of the youthful soldiers who "on the promise of the yield" go gladly forward and "sow their bodies on the field".⁷⁶ The rain image is found in the baptismal drops that redeem:

Might not one day
Baptismal drops be turned against him,
In a rain of death?⁷⁷

In autumn imagery the withering of flowers and leaves and the drying of fountains, pastures and wells foretell the death of mankind in the departure of the summer of life:

Comes not the autumn here,
Though someone said
He found a leaf in the sere
By the aster dead;
And knew that the summer was done,
For the herdsman cried
That his pastures were brown in the sun,
And his wells were dried.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ E.J. Pratt, "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.93.

⁷⁵ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.93.

⁷⁶ Ibid., "The Invaded Field", p.21.

⁷⁷ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.54.

⁷⁸ Ibid., "Comes Not the Seasons Here", p.22.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

181

In another image the poet speaks of death as a sentry who will sooner or later halt all human pilgrims:

When the swift irresponsible trespass
Of our feet above ground,
Is cut short by the halt of the sentry.⁷⁹

The slipping of the grains of sand from one bulb to the other in the hour-glass, thus marking the swift and persistent approach of death is found in a image of a stampede:

This hurried pace
Of the atoms as they strove to pass
From bulb to bulb, fighting their way
From life to death in an unexplained stampede.⁸⁰

The evolution of time, the years that have died, is found in a classical image of, "mildew of reed" and "rust of lyre".

Hasten for time may pass you by
Mildew the reed and rust the lyre;
Look that Tunisian glow will die
As died the Carthaginian fire.⁸¹

Death is the recipient of the supreme gift of humanity:

'Twas not enough it seemed
That her one gift to life
Should be returned to death.⁸²

Death is the great discipline of sea and land:

Meanwhile a nation that was never spared
The discipline of waters,
Had prepared her subject's hearts
To attest the valour of the deed.⁸³

79 E.J. Pratt, "The Impatient Earth", p.30.

80 Ibid., "Father Time", p.24.

81 Ibid., "Still Life", p.22.

82 Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.218.

83 Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.162.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

182

The image of a ride or a rider or a drive sometimes portrays death when the poet wants to convey its onward motion its swift approach on its non-static quality; the gallant old sea captain would go to meet death riding on the waves:

He who had learned for thirty years to ride
The seas and storms in punt and skiff and brig,
Would hardly scorn to take before he died
His final lap in Neptune's whirligig.⁸⁴

In another image one does not drive to death but passively drifts with the current:

But to drift in his boat to the port of God:⁸⁵

In another image Death is the rider, who from far off spaces of the evening tides and with music and prayer will overtake man:

And music followed, when a litany
Begun with ring of foam bells and the purl
Of linguals as the edges cut the sea,
Crashed upon a rising storm, with whirlwind
Of flocs from far off spaces where Death rides
The darkened belfries of his evening tides.⁸⁶

There are few images of the futility of death and even these, when they are encountered, bring with them the assurance that though futile in itself, Death is the presage of a vast and highly important act, or as Pratt has called it "The Iliad of Death".⁸⁷ Of the few images of futility that one may meet it will be sufficient to cite a couple:

⁸⁴ E.J. Pratt, "The Drag Irons", p.182.

⁸⁵ Ibid., "The History of John Jones", p.192.

⁸⁶ Ibid., "The Sea Cathedral", p.212.

⁸⁷ Ibid., "The Iliad of Death".

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

183

Then in ironic jest
 Had carven out the crest
 Of Death upon the lintel.⁸⁸

And in another image the "jest" is intensified into almost a lack of plan in the mind of the Creator:

One who had sought for beauty all his days,
 In form and colour, symphony and phrase,
 Who had looked at gods made perfect by man's hand,
 And Nature's glories on the sea and land,--
 Now paused and wondered, if the Creator's power,
 Finding itself without a plan was spent,
 Leaving no relic at this vacant hour,
 But a grave-stone and an iron monument.⁸⁹

In mock-epic fashion the animals with almost human reasoning view death not as glorious adventure but as a futile waste of life:

Did reason enter in to touch
 The senses with the thought of death,
 And flash across goat-laden eyes
 Glimpses of futilitarian skies.⁹⁰

In "The Cachalot" the stroke of death is ushered in not by the light of reason but by speed, courage, pride and anger:

All the tonnage, all the speed,
 All the courage of his breed,
 The pride and anger of his breath,
 The battling legions of his blood,
 Met in an unresisted thud
 Smote in a double stroke of death.⁹¹

In another image death comes with martial orders leaving the will no choice; just as in a realistic battle panic and

⁸⁸ E.J. Pratt, "The Iron Door", p.212.

⁸⁹ Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.216.

⁹⁰ Ibid., "The Fable of the Goats", p.299.

⁹¹ Ibid., "The Cachalot", p.181.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

184

flight may be checked by martial music so in the final battle of life:

But some
Wavered a moment with a panic urge;
But rallied to attention on the verge
Of flight, as if the rattle of a drum
From quarters faint but unmistakable
Had put the stiffening in the blood to check
The impulse of the feet, leaving the will
No choice.⁹²

Death is renoun and eternal splendor if its cause be righteous:

Men whose bones were bound for death
Would find that on those jagged characters
Their names would rise from their oblivion
To flame on an eternal calendar.⁹³

The eternal purchase price is paid by death when a worthy sailor offers his life for the rescue of others:

He paid his price
In drifting past the adventure of return.⁹⁴

And in the same poem the effects of resuscitation, the call back to life is a miracle; this might be classed as an image of life or of death:

Where men are shepherded in the old way
Of the sea, where drowned men come to life, they say,
Under such calls to breathe as never come
To those who roam the uplands of the earth.⁹⁵

Death is a garment (a scriptural borrowing): "shall put on immortality",⁹⁶ or in another instance (a ritual borrowing)

⁹² E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.124.

⁹³ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.58.

⁹⁴ Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.149.

⁹⁵ Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.160.

⁹⁶ Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.150.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

185

"restore to me the stole of immortality".⁹⁷ Death is an animal: "baiting death".⁹⁸ And in a more extended image it is an infection spread by the winds of life:

He had while master of another vessel
Rescued a Philadelphian bark at sea,
In winds not less full of death than these.⁹⁹

The winds of Newfoundland may bring death as a musical note of hope or even of disaster:

They die with the largo of dusk,
Their hands are full to the overflow
In their right is the bread of life,
In their left the waters of death.¹⁰⁰

In other poems the poet may speak of death as a spell, an exchange, a whisper, a vote, as "but now cunning could do what fear forbade;/ A brace of Huron runners/ Were sent into the neutral country/ With rich bribes to put the priests to death.; and again we find "Only to find whispers of death.;" "While the chiefs in closest council/ On the Huron terms voted for life or death."; "The council ended",/ The feeling strong for death but ruled by fears;/ For if those foreign spirits had the power,/ To spread the blight upon the land, what could/ Their further vengeance not exact."¹⁰¹

Pratt seems always to avoid the inactivity and the sterility that many other poets so frequently employ in their

⁹⁷ E.J. Pratt, "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.100

⁹⁸ Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.153.

⁹⁹ Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.160.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., "Newfoundland", p.166.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", pp.36-94.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

186

imagery, because of this he makes very little use of the conventional image of death as sleep, and even when he does employ it he tries to lessen the impact, as when he tells of the horrors of the Dunkirk rescue: "Sleep at last has an even game with Death".¹⁰² The negative aspect of death is not that which the poet most frequently stresses, he is always more interested in the activity and the strife than in the passivity and the irresistance. By imagery we are constantly reminded of the relentlessness of death. This is true even in the case of a little child whose experience is too meager to comprehend the tragedy:

Standing anxious-eyed,
So small against the drift of space,
Enveloped by the gloom,
A boy searched for his father's face,
With that unvoiced appeal,
Which I remember, when he brought
A water-spaniel home one day.
Crushed beneath an engine-wheel;
And could not, by a rational way,
Be fully made to understand
That the mending of a lifeless body lay
Beyond the surgery of his father's hand.¹⁰³

This same relentlessness is felt by more mature onlookers, the crew and passengers of "The Titanic" feel it and accept it; while the gallant crew of "The Roosevelt" whose case has not yet been touched by desperation, feel it and challenge it.

¹⁰² E.J. Pratt, "Dunkirk", p.10.

¹⁰³ Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.214.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

187

Everywhere throughout the poems Pratt's images constantly remind us that death has not the power to take from us completely and forever those whom we have loved in life. This thought, with its undercurrent of hope "of deathlessness" is brought home to the reader more frequently than any other. It would seem to be the Pratt-philosophy that "the struggle availeth" and that loved ones will meet even beyond the margins of time:

I only know my heart is beating slowly;
Come--and swift your feet!
Or else there will be neither noon nor midnight
When we meet.¹⁰⁴

Seldom does the poet view life and death as opposites; and if he does by poetic chance place the concepts in this relationship.. he hastens to interject a note of joy, to counterbalance the fear and make the challenge happy in either eventuality----for death is but a fuller life:

Here is the service of joy
That we will take whatever God ordains
For us, whether it be life or death.¹⁰⁵

Or again the same thought of perfect trust and submission is expressed in:

And when I have received the stroke of death,
I will accept it from Thy gracious hand
With pleasure, and with joy in my heart.
To Thee my blood, my body, and my life.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ E.J. Pratt, "Timeworn", p.200.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.81.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.59.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

188

Time

Turning to Pratt's images of time we see that he makes use of some conventional pictures, but always clothes them with his own original phrasing. One entire poem is devoted to "Father Time" who in ages that are gone leisurely watched the sands pass on their unhurried way through the hour glass of life:

He had measured many tempos in his season,
But never cared for speed.
He always liked the sanitary, slow,
Grave manner of the mountains.¹⁰⁷

Father Time had watched the mountains building up grain by grain:

He had seen them flow
In rivulets of crystal grains,
Down through this very corridor
To the deltas of the ocean shore.
He had watched the plants and trees turn into coal;
The marks of the fronds were in their veins
Resembling those of his own hands and temples.
He remembered how he used to while
Away the aeons, pondering the roll
Of the Amazon and the Nile.
The curve of sand dunes of Sahara,
The depositions of the layers of gneiss,
The march of the granite boulders,
Under the control
Of dynasties of ice.¹⁰⁸

Lest the above passage be considered too extensive, or an assemblage of images, rather than a central one; what was expressed in the first chapter regarding the method Pratt uses will be repeated here. Pratt does not employ the metaphorical mode solely "but uses it with discretion and in

¹⁰⁷ E.J. Pratt, "Father Time", p.24.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., "Father Time", p.24.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

189

conjunction with the thought and idea of imagery".¹⁰⁹ Pratt sometimes renders a passage figurative by giving life-like characteristics to only one or two words, a habit which makes it necessary to quote non-revalent material or non-figurative expressions in order to cull the essential image therefrom. For Father Time this slow movement, this measured tread of mountains and rivers was just as it should be, the ages should roll by with grace and dignity, but man impatient of change effects an interruption. Pratt in his imagery shows that the pace has been quickened and that the alteration brings with it fear and apprehension:

Worry had crept into the old man's face.
Why did he have to tilt the hour-glass
So often?¹¹⁰

Father Time considers the strange hurrying of the grains and death and destruction is foreshadowed:

Strange, he thought, this hurried pace
Of atoms as they strove to pass
From bulb to bulb, fighting their way
From life to death, in an unexplained stampede.¹¹¹

His thought goes to the saurians, "a prehistoric file" that has now passed completely from the earth; and fear for man's self-destruction is found in the succeeding image:

¹⁰⁹ Florence Marsh, "Wordsworth's Imagery, A Study in Poetic Vision", New Haven, Yale University Press, 1952, pp146.

¹¹⁰ E.J. Pratt, "Father Time", p.24.

¹¹¹ Ibid., "Father Time", p.24.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

190

This new adventure--
 Which called itself a soul,
 With its melange of pride,
 Courage, honour, suicide,
 Pursuing an eternal goal---112

The poet then in vivid imagery explains that it is the human element that has wrecked Time's "cool pre-Cambrian sense of sequence".¹¹³ The misplaced ardour of man has brought with it destruction of man himself and defeat of Time's purpose.

In a poem of contrasting imagery Time is accused of invention and change, of casting aside his hour-glass and scythe and assuming the port of a young god of power:

Time shedding his mask
 His lazy hour-glass, his rusty scythe,
 And all his tattered mortalities
 Curved over bowed decrepit shoulders,
 Assumed the stature of a young Apollyon.
 He rose a paragon of Power.¹¹⁴

Invention has brought new life to the world which had grown sluggish with its self-sufficiency, but invention has also brought death; Time is invested with:

A set of golden keys
 Closing all doors of life,
 Fitting the wards of death,
 Hung from a girdle at his waist.¹¹⁵

In another image of time, invention goes hand in hand with miracle:

112 E.J. Pratt, "Father Time", p.24.

113 Ibid., "Father Time", p.24.

114 Ibid., "The Radio in the Ivory Tower", p.15.

115 Ibid., "The Radio in the Ivory Tower", p.15.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

191

Through wireless waves as yet unstaled by use¹¹⁶

And the same idea is found in:

The wonder of the ether had begun
To fold the heavens up and reinduce
That ancient hubris in the dreams of men,
Which would have slain the cattle of the sun.¹¹⁷

In animal imagery time is spoken of as a breeder:

Another ninety moons and Time
Had cast a marvel from his hand,
Unmatched on either sea or land--
A sperm whale in the pitch of prime.¹¹⁸

Frequently for the poet time is a plunderer:

To-day the vaunt is with the grave.¹¹⁹

Or again when the poet speaks of the dog he loved so much
which has now grown old and stiff. The poet accuses time and
old age of robbing it of activity and vitality as though time
were a chemist who can administer a deadly potion:

Time accounts for it,
Pouring his chilling rime instead of blood,
Through arteries and veins,
And hardening up the walls.¹²⁰

But the poet philosophically reflects that the plunder cannot
make old age the richer:

So poor again--with all that plunder taken.¹²¹

116 E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.98.

117 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.98.

118 Ibid., "The Cachalot", p.168.

119 Ibid., "Toll of the Bells", p.199.

120 Ibid., "A Reverie on a Dog", p.204.

121 Ibid., "Old Age", p.226.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

192

Time is a plunderer even on the sea:

The sea is old to-day,
A sudden stealth of age
Has torn away
The texture of its youth and grace.¹²²

And in the same poem, "Time has filched the rose of daybreak from its waters".¹²³ Over and over the poet equates old age with time, this might be considered too prosaic or too worn an image to merit attention did not the poet express his thought in an original way:

"Tis just old age plying her needles
Through and through,
That knits the tangles in the cartilage.¹²⁴

In another image of the breakdown of physical strength; as time passes it dims the eyesight and makes weary the feet:

When our eyes are dim with day
And our feet are tired with stubble.¹²⁵

There are several cosmic images in which time measures the age of the world:

The pundit lectured that the world was young
As ever, frisking like a spring-time colt
Around the sun, his mother.¹²⁶

In another image the poet by a single word shows that the world is aged:

So let the yellowing world revolve.¹²⁷

¹²² E.J. Pratt, "Sea Variations", p.471.

¹²³ Ibid., "Sea Variations", p.472.

¹²⁴ Ibid., "A Reverie on a Dog", p.204.

¹²⁵ Ibid., "The Impatient Earth", p.29.

¹²⁶ Ibid., "Seen on the Road", p.25.

¹²⁷ Ibid., "Fire", p.97.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

193

In imagery the cruelty of time is stressed:

When
A winter pack of wolves brought down a stag,
There was no waste of time between the leap
And the business click upon the juglar.¹²⁸

Yet, on the other hand time is kind, it touches wounds very softly:

The rust of hours,
Through a year of days,
Has dulled the edge of pain.¹²⁹

The conventional image of time as opportunity is found in this imagery:

Hasten for time may pass you by.¹³⁰

Time is measured by the revolutions of a wheel:

From stone to bronze, from bronze to steel,
Along the road-dust of the sun,
Two revolutions of the wheel
From Java to Geneva run.¹³¹

Time "had thinned the jungle strains within the cells"¹³² and brought the cat from the wilderness of the leopard's tracks to the domestic animal of to-day.

What distance since the velvet pads
Departed from the leopard's track.¹³³

In another number of images time is measured by musical notes:

128 E.J. Pratt, "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.55.

129 Ibid., "The Drowning", p.189.

130 Ibid., "Still Life", p.23.

131 Ibid., "From Stone to Steel", p.20.

132 Ibid., "The Prize Cat", p.19.

133 Ibid., "The Prize Cat", p.19.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

194

Its come-and-go of racial dust, its strum
 Of windy discords from the seven seas,
 Its scream of fifes and din of kettle-drum
 That lead the march toward the futurities.¹³⁴

The waters of eternity surge with the beat of Time:

The noise of stubborn waters
 Came in from a distant tide
 To the beat of Time with slow,
 Immeasurable stride.¹³⁵

The solemn note of this music can only be compared with the tones of earth's drab hours: "A music that the earth had only known in the drab hours of its emptiness, or in the crisis of a fiery stress, fell on my ear."¹³⁶ In another image a new era of time is ushered in by procession music:

With music of march and rolloof drums,
 To prelude the close of a civilized aeon.¹³⁷

In still further imagery time is measured in the conventional way by days and weeks and months:

There are months still to go for the autumn,
 And months for the poppies to bloom.¹³⁸

In another image youth is in the morning of life: "Too soon in the morning of youth",¹³⁹ in another image time is a searing memory: "Each hour of that former mission burned at his finger tips."¹⁴⁰ Time is the purchase price of life: "Time,

¹³⁴ E.J. Pratt, "The Mystic", p.28.

¹³⁵ Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.213.

¹³⁶ Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.213.

¹³⁷ Ibid., "The Radio", p.15.

¹³⁸ Ibid., "The Impatient Earth", p.30.

¹³⁹ Ibid., "The Impatient Earth", p.30.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.75.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

195

a commodity beyond the purchase price of the Rand".¹⁴¹ Time is a myth: "Their souls had come to birth out of their racial myths."¹⁴² Or we may even have spring approaching with accompanying heralds; that had not even been heard of in other days:

The English May was slipping into June,
With heralds that the spring had never known.¹⁴³

Time is akin to eternity:

Should every hour changing to
Time yet changeless be.¹⁴⁴

Time has almost an architectural aspect in "along the galleries of the night".¹⁴⁵ and also in, "Legions unnumbered moving at the rate of light, pushed beyond all navigated regions, exploring every cranny of the night, reaching out through dusky corridors above the sea to uninhabited shores,"¹⁴⁶ The little lad on the "Titanic" snatched nobility from borrowed time: "To waive the privilege of his youth and size, and piled the inches on his stature."¹⁴⁷ In other imagery illness is a collaborator with time and old age to break down a physical stature: "When the will that feeds the

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

196

tumults of our natures, rests along the broken arteries of its quest."¹⁴⁸ Or the sea troubled with time "lies broken as with centuries,"¹⁴⁹ time softens harsher memories, "Night flings, her crape of shadow, on a tossing line of jetsom."¹⁵⁰ And again in other imagery of direct contrast time instead of softening memory renders it more vivid and becomes a pitiless revealer: "In a ruthless moment thou dost strip the veiling from our eyes."¹⁵¹ Time brings false security to the stricken aboard the doomed "Titanic", "Night had placed a lazy lusciousness, upon a surfeit of security,"¹⁵² artificial gadgetism carries with it the deception of false security: "The miracle of day displacing night had worked its fascination to beguile/ Direction of the hours and cheat the sight."¹⁵³ The passing of time is a tale that has been told:

He knew
That the margins as thin as they were
By which he escaped from death,
Through the eighteen years of his mission toil
Did not belong to this chapter.¹⁵⁴

And in other imagery the bells toll "A tale of life's fore-shortened days."¹⁵⁵ Time is a rectifier and a deliverer: "The

¹⁴⁸ E.J. Pratt, "Fire", p.97.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., "Sea Variations", p.471.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., "Sea Variations", p.473.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., "Sea Variations", p.473.

¹⁵² Ibid., "The Titanic", p.125.

¹⁵³ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.102.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.90.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., "The Toll of the Bells", p.199.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

197

skies that had banked their fires are shining anew."¹⁵⁶ This beneficent influence is felt in further images: "There in due time to blossom into the highways of God".¹⁵⁷ The fleetness of time is shown in: "A moment only for the veil to lift."¹⁵⁸ and in "Time was running out before my eyes,"¹⁵⁹ Time is a perceptor, we are made wise by the discipline of time; "Like something borrowed from eternity."¹⁶⁰

Time is a physician, the priests in the wilderness deprived of all else could still have prayer filled hours:

These were the hours
That put the bandages upon their hurts;
Make their spirits proof against all ills,
That had assailed or could assail the flesh.¹⁶¹

Time bids us recall the past and then regret and repair:

And bids us cast
Our glances on a labyrinthine past.¹⁶²

And finally time may be bartered for eternity:

These were the hours
That turned winter into spring,
And made return to their far mission posts
An exaltation.¹⁶³

From this study of the imagery of time it would seem that Pratt considers that one's evaluation of time depends

¹⁵⁶ E.J. Pratt, "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.94.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.94.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.91.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.218.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., "To Angelina, An Old Nurse", p.192.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.75.

¹⁶² Ibid., "Sea Variations", p.473.

¹⁶³ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.79.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

198

largely upon one's philosophy of life. Time is a gift to be used, for "night and the candle-quietness of sleep",¹⁶⁴ will come when we may lay down the burdens of the day and let the "tumult of our natures rest along the broken arteries of the quest".

To emphasize the slow passage of time the poet equates minutes and seconds to hours and days: "The wrist-watch ticks off hours instead of seconds."¹⁶⁵ and again the same imagery is found: "The clock had struck in seasons those two nights!"¹⁶⁶ Perhaps the most unique and Pratt-like image is one of time a washerwoman: "That an old dishonoured postulate scrubbed of its rust, might shine again" and in another instance the poet imparts to the sea a housewife's prerogative as it works with time:

The sea would tidy up its floor in time
But not just now.¹⁶⁷

There are very few personifications of hate to be found in the poetry of Pratt; those we do encounter are confined for the most part to the drama of the pagan Indians, whom Christianity has not yet touched, or to the poems of animal life, which exemplify and symbolize human beings divorced from the influence of reason. However in the later

¹⁶⁴ E.J. Pratt, "Fire", p.97.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., "Behind the Log", p.34.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., "Behind the Log", p.46.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., "Behind the Log", p.28.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

199

poems, written when the poet was disturbed by the impact of a paralyzing Power and an almost diabolical social inconsistency we find satirical notes that speak of hatred; although these are present almost always there is the didactic equation with love and tolerance: the sin is hated but the sinner condoned and pitied. Hate is seldom, active, piercing, definite or vivid; rather it is negative, empty, inert or restrictive and twisted. The poet makes sure that his reader sees its irregularity and incongruity, and also the havoc it can wreak, but he never gives it as a final and irrevocable issue. In other words the imagery that Pratt gives of hate always proclaims its own loathsomeness, it never wins adherents; nor is there any allurement or deception about it. "The Truant" is an elaborated symbol of human resistance to the god Power, this god having been distorted and glorified is now of pagan proportions and is divorced from all moral consideration. The poem was written at the height of the Nazi regime. The Panjandrum is personified Power without kindness, mercy, or love. The Truant is a Christian who defies this giant of might and is willing to suffer pain and death rather than be submissive. The poem concludes on the spiritual note of the Rood--the sublimest symbol of sacrificial love. Power having been given its stature by man had now outgrown "the weave of the atomic pattern"¹⁶⁸ and despising him who gave it birth

¹⁶⁸ E.J. Pratt, "The Truant", p.309.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

200

pronounced the sentence of hatred toward mankind who will not obey: Panjandrum speaks:

You have fallen like a curse
 Upon the mechanics of my Universe.
 Herewith I measure out your penalty--
 I send you now upon your homeward route
 Where you shall find
 Humiliation for your pride of mind.

And when your rebel will
 Is mouldered, all desire
 Shrivelled, all your concepts broken,
 Backward in dust I'll blow you till
 You join the spiral festival of fire.¹⁶⁹

Then man "defiant and with free toss of head"¹⁷⁰ declares the rightful authorship of power, "we flung the graphs about your flying feet./ "Twas we who pinned upon your Seraphim their wings./ We turned a human page,/ and blotted out a cosmic myth./¹⁷¹

We who have met
 With stubborn calm the dawn's hot fusillades;

 We who have learned to clench our fists
 And raise our lightless sockets
 To morning skies after the midnights raise.¹⁷²

We can recognize you by the spirit of hate that urges you on; we are fearless in the strength of God--from the lesson of the cross we have learned strength to resist you! "No, by the Rood we will not join your ballet!"¹⁷³ The imagery contained in

¹⁶⁹ E.J. Pratt, "The Truant", p.310.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., "The Truant", p.310.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., "The Truant", p.210.

¹⁷² Ibid., "The Truant", p.311.

¹⁷³ Ibid., "The Truant", p.312.

"The Truant" and here expressed should be interpreted as is explained above. It has been thought necessary to work out the image pattern in this extended manner because many and various interpretations have been given to this poem most of which are far from the poet's Christian concepts. John Sutherland in "The Poetry of E.J. Pratt", gives the following misinterpretation:

There are varying conceptions of God throughout the poetry. Occasionally, as in these lines from "The Truant", God is conceived simply as a product of man's imagination (the words are addressed to the Almighty):¹⁷⁴

And, when one day grown conscious of your age,
While pondering an eclith,
We turned a human page
And blotted out a cosmic myth
with all its baby symbols to explain
The sunlight in Apollo's eyes,
Our rising pulses and the birth of pain,
Fear, and that fern-and-fungus breath
Stalking our nostrils to our caves of death--
That day we learned how to anatomize
Your body, calibrate your size
And set a mirror up before your face
To show you what you really were--a rain
Of dull Lucretian atoms crowding space...

Yet, even in "The Truant", there are traces of a more usual speculation on the deity's malevolence. Man rebels against

it: He has developed concepts, grins
 Obscenely at your Royal bulletins,
 Possesses what he calls a will
 Which challenges your power to kill...

God is sometimes equated with Nature and is then to be saddled with all the natural evils, real or apparent. He may display cruelty ("the power to kill") and even a trace of satanism "The Truant" concludes with a fervent expression of this secular faith.".... "In this context God is only a stubborn element in man's fate which may yet be redeemed by the human example

¹⁷⁴ John Sutherland, "The Poetry of E.J. Pratt", p.18.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

202

of Christ.¹⁷⁵

The poem "The Truant" contains many images of hate and fear, they are interwoven to form a cosmic pattern of injustice and of greed and of power-gone-astray; Pratt, the Christian poet in a world disturbed by the Nazi threat would take issue against this god Power and his main weapon of defense is the "Rood"-- Sutherland's interpretation is incorrect as are several other criticisms which equated God and Nature. Since this chapter deals with hate and fear the imagery and the refutation are worked out in more than usual detail in order to give strength to the Christian implication of the poetry.

There are isolated instances wherein Pratt portrays hatred as a passion that is forceful, vindictive and even implacable and unrelenting in intensity:

But worst of all the horrors which
Enmeshed them was the galling sense
That never would the recompense
Of battle come; that primal itch
For vengeance would expend its force,
According to an adverse Fate
Running a self-destroying course
Down the blind alley of their hate.¹⁷⁶

The surface level of this poem might proclaim that the hate referred to was divorced from reason because it makes its comment on human experience by using the device of animal characters. It gives an account of a "great Tellurian feud"

¹⁷⁵ John Sutherland, "The Poetry of E.J. Pratt, pp.19-20.

¹⁷⁶ E.J. Pratt, "The Great Feud", p.259.

between the land animals and the sea animals of Australasia, in some period "long before the birth of man". The pretext of the quarrel is the ownership of the coastal feeding-grounds. There is reason to believe that Pratt intended the poem to be didactic, to be a comment upon the social results of war with its "suicidal waste". Some critics have considered it as an essay in psychological analysis in which there is a clash of violence between compassion:

The force of the "Feud" derives in a very large measure from the constant juxtaposition of images of violence with images of compassion, and on the gradual and subtle alteration of the relationship between them.¹⁷⁷

What we may sense rather than consciously realize as we read the poem is the implicit irony of the language; the images of strength are also images of a savage and remorseless violence—as, for example, in the "scourging wash and tidal rip" of the waters battering the coast-line.

In at least one instance they carry a suggestion of the grotesque and the macabre (in the reference to Jurania, in the "brooding dread/ Outline of a volcano's head"). Thus the real effect of the passage is decidedly ambivalent: it depends on a tension or on a variable balance between the exhilaration of the poet's manner and a certain brutal element in his materials. The exact effect, at any given point, will be determined by the poet's choice and arrangement of his materials. As long as we remain oblivious to the brutality, we are able to share a delight in strength which passes insensibly over into a delight in violence when, for a moment, we are made conscious of the brutality, we have a conflicting sense of the

¹⁷⁷ John Sutherland, op.cit., p.90.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

204

terrifying implications of strength. In a pattern we perceive only dimly, our sensations waver between the feeling of delight and a sense of horror of violence.¹⁷⁸

Our sense of horror has been inspired by the implied images of hate and the hatred is the more acute because the object of the violence is helpless and innocent. Interfusing the images of violence and hatred there is a series of images of a tender and romantic kind; thus the hate imagery being unobtrusively introduced are the more deadly in concept:

Like a quarter moon the shoreline curled
Upon the neck of the ancient world.¹⁷⁹

The suggestion of romantic and maternal love in this imagery is not unintentional.

In the lines near the conclusion, the romance of human history is suggested by "the far adventurous design... Of life that left the ocean slime." There are various references to birth and to the period of childhood...as in "the birth of man," "the Modern Magians" (with its echo of the journey of the Magi), the "birth of Australasia," and "the original nursery....of the land and sea." Even Jurania is personified as a female and she is said to wear the expression of a "brooding dread".¹⁸⁰

Insensibly, such images will arouse a horror of violence even as they tend to have a more positive effect. They will suggest a rule of love that can be opposed to the seeming savagery of nature. This poem has imagery of hatred that seems to be deeply imbedded in an alien context, and for that reason it does not register in a conscious way: There

¹⁷⁸ John Sutherland, op.cit., pp.91-92.

¹⁷⁹ E.J. Pratt, "The Great Feud", p.256.

¹⁸⁰ See Sutherland's The Poetry of E.J. Pratt, chapter IV.p.80.

are insistent references to birth, to youth, and to childhood, and to the relation of kin: birth (born), brood, young(est), little(st), breed(s), parent(parental), and blood(in the sense of relationship), youthful, racial, sisters, brothers, yearning, matriarch, female, family, babes, nurseries, gentle, calves, allied (by blood), smallest, internecine, unfertile, and kindred. All these images foreshow beyond the least doubt that the poem has a definite relationship with man; that the poet is not entirely interested in portraying a sea-animal fight as such; he expects, rather, that the reader will lift the poem to a human level of meaning. The positive gaiety of some of the passages is bound to be disarming; and the exuberant language can insinuate a delight in strength. This gaiety and what may even be classed as comic episodes prove in the denouement to have been a yawning trap. The images of hatred are there and are all the more meaningful because of the touches of light and love that mingle with them. Tyrannosaurus, the throw back, has been reared and nourished by a moa, "until he took on strength and killed/ All comers with their sires and dams." He has just consumed "a vinery of red grape," producing a "yeastly alimentary state." In spite of the mock-heroic tone of some of the passages, we are obliged to recognize, a delight in vicious violence, and a lust to kill and destroy. The role played by the "Sumatran chimpanzee" suggests that human reason can violate the most

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

206

sacred laws in a cold and deliberate fashion, while creatures without the power of a human intellect are limited to what they can do with their instincts.

Some scenes (in *The Great Feud*) are as a mirror held up to the face of the reader. In them he can contemplate the full horror of violence and his own share of responsibility for its existence.¹⁸¹

The imagery of violence and hatred throughout the poem is in a manner counterbalanced by the numerous images of compassion. The compassion is sustained as the volcano erupts over the battle-scene and the few who escape the lava are chased to "The drowning mercies of the sea".¹⁸² That effect is possible partly because of the personification of Jurania and because we are shown her eruption as the agony of a child reaching out for maternal warmth:

It shot a fifteen thousand feet
Straight to the sky, then billowing higher,
And outward, made as if to meet
Its own maternal stellar fire
With tenuous play of finger streaks.¹⁸³

In part, too, the compassion is sustained because of the universal scope of the destruction. "Such an enormity, a tragedy involving multitudes of living creatures, will inevitably arouse a sense of awe that is mingled with pity."¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ John Sutherland, *op.cit.*, p.98.

¹⁸² E.J. Pratt, "The Great Feud", p.287.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, "The Great Feud", p.100.

¹⁸⁴ John Sutherland, *op.cit.*, p.99.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

207

On the other hand the poem may be interpreted as a work of religious vision. It envisages the triumph of "compassion" over "violence" not in any earthly sense, but in the manner guaranteed to us by revelation--that is to say, through Christ's triumph over death and His pledge of immortal life. To achieve unity in the working out of the imagery of grace, to exemplify the triumph of the spirit over the emotion of hate, and thereby to portray Pratt's Christian conceptions of a cosmic struggle in a more vivid light it is necessary to overlap in this section of the thesis the religious implications that will be considered in their own right in a section further on. For this poem "The Great Feud" may be considered in its religious setting:

In fact, so far as the first part of the Feud is concerned, it is Fate, and not the female simian, who appears to be the real perpetrator of Armageddon. During the poem Fate is changed to Jurania, the volcano, because Jurania has a complex character capable of development. Nature and supernature meet in Jurania as in a single person. Physically, she towers over the scene of Armageddon; and with her gift of foresight, her power of total destruction, she has qualities which far transcend those of the animals. Her will, in fact, has the absolute touch. It is she who brings the battle to a close.¹⁸⁵

Any one of the three interpretations of the poem may be accepted; but as this thesis is not especially concerned with symbolic understructures, as such, but merely touches symbols that develop from basic imagery, it is beyond its scope to

¹⁸⁵ John Sutherland, op.cit., p.103.

make a more definite decision. A thesis of the symbolic meaning of the poetry of Pratt might be with profit considered as a further study. However it may not be out of place to state here that perhaps a fusion of all three interpretations in lesser or greater degrees may approach more nearly to the idea of the poet than any single analysis can hope to do. Whatever be the actual meaning it is certain that in this poem as well as in the other animal poems, the poet by picturing the smouldering anger and hatred of the animals is identifying them with man. Pratt is disturbed by the "philosophical nonchalance that our modern world interprets as broad-mindedness";¹⁸⁶ Pratt fears for the integrity and the security of men who like other Pilates have turned their backs upon the uniqueness of truth and have opened wide their arms to all the moods and fancies that the "isms" and the "ologies" of the hour may dictate. In this didactic and satiric poem the poet portrays evil and hate and fear in animal nature to show his real concern with the destruction which these uncurbed emotions are causing in man:

Folly it is to speculate
Upon the food that Cyrus ate,
That inland buds of evergreen
With valley shoots could mitigate
A million years of feudal hate.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ Fulton Sheen, "A Plea for Tolerance" in Old Errors and New Labels, New York, Appleton-Century Company, 1935, p.105.

¹⁸⁷ E.J. Pratt, "The Fable of the Goats", p.299.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

209

In "The Fable of the Goats" we also find a social struggle, with images of hate overwhelming human reason--we find servile hate and fear in man which will at length emerge in cosmic struggle:

A futile anger like a curse
 Only made confusion worse.
 Their mad desire to strike back
 At their destroying coward-foe
 Turned all their fury of attack
 Into consuming vertigo.¹⁸⁸

The curse of anger, the overwhelming desire "to strike back" is the revenge and the hatred of men bent on the total destruction of a foe, and as a consequence unknowingly working their own self-destruction. Man has been given the gift of reason to mitigate and to modify his passions that he may not:

Be plunged in blackest misery
 By that insane, consuming hate
 Of ignorant, inarticulate
 Cold-blooded barbarians of the sea.
 All we observant ones have seen
 That at high tides in clouded moons
 The habits of the fish have been
 To pass into the great lagoons,
 To lie in wait throughout the course
 Of night and morning to midday,
 Then chase our swimming breeds and slay
 Them with no feeling of remorse.¹⁸⁹

In speaking of the uncurbed hatred of the pagan foes against the French priests, the poet likens it to a mighty river whose torrent cannot be stemmed:

¹⁸⁸ E.J. Pratt, "The Great Feud", p.259.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., "The Great Feud", p.266.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

210

Death was certain soon. He knew it.
 For the mounting tide of hate could not be stemmed
 It had engulfed his friends
 'Twould take him next.¹⁹⁰

In another image hate is a flame which is all-consuming:

But often would the hate of Mohawk foes
 Flame out anew.¹⁹¹

In another image hate forms a bond to unite enemies against a
 foe:

The Iroquois had waited long for this event,
 Their hatred for the Hurons
 Fused with their hatred for the French and priests
 Was to be vented in this sacrifice.¹⁹²

And later a like image of the accumulative effect of hatred
 is expressed in other phrasing:

The apostate Hurons had come
 United to their foes in common hate,
 To settle up their reckoning with Echon.¹⁹³

In the British/German struggle when smouldering hatred flares
 up because of the injustice of a hostile power, peace terms
 and arbitration will be cast aside as futile:

Appeasement is in its grave: it sleeps well.¹⁹⁴
 Hatred seems to be hoarded in silence as if that were the
 culture best suited to its growth:

¹⁹⁰ E.J. Pratt, "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.74.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.73.

¹⁹² Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.91.

¹⁹³ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.91.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., "Dunkirk", p.1.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

211

For growl and cough and snarl,
 Are the tokens of spendthrifts,
 Who know not the ultimate economy of rage.¹⁹⁵

And the same idea of hatred with the animal instinct of devouring all love and virtue and forbearance is expressed in:

Let silent hate be put away
 For it feeds upon the heart of the hater.¹⁹⁶

Again the poet gives an image of hate growing to maturity as weeds, noxious and space-consuming, and by their unchecked germination and cultivation sapping the strength of patience and tolerance and love: "Hate and greed have grown to their harvest,/ Though tolerance, forgiveness, and love are forgotten,/ Like the scars on the Body of Christ".¹⁹⁷ If all the better instincts are ignored and the lessons of the Divine Exemplar are regarded as nought, then hatred is bound to grow, to spread, and to increase. The poet makes this truth quite clear; but he also shows that hatred may be quenched by love, and that a deadly enemy may be converted into a friend by forgiveness and kindly deeds:

(The enemy) with wound adjourning wound, shall draw
 His equal measure to the sacrament
 From an old well to which some mortals went
 When, with their thirsts ablaze, they looked and saw
 An Orient form uplifted in the skies,
 And quenched their hate in his forgiving eyes.¹⁹⁸

195 E.J. Pratt, "Silences", p.17.

196 Ibid., "Silences", p.17.

197 Ibid., "The Impatient Earth", p.30.

198 Ibid., "To an Enemy", p.95.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

212

As regards the images of fear Pratt points out that fear may be paralyzing and destructive. Even the untutored minds of the Indians perceived that fear might have power to mitigate other passions:

Was not Echon, Brebeuf, the evil one?
Still all attempts to kill him were forestalled,
For awe and fear had mitigated fury.¹⁹⁹

Fear may overpower the rational dictates of the will:

The council ended,
The feeling strong for death but ruled by fears,
For if those foreign spirits had the power
To spread the blight upon the land,
What could their further vengeance not exact.²⁰⁰

Sometimes fear is inspired by and equated to awe, a certain reverence that overpowers and checks the savage nature, at least a sufficiently long enough time to purchase security for the victim:

Fear and wonder checked the Indians
At the sight of a single dark-robed
Unarmed challenger,
Against arrows, muskets, spears and tomahawks;
That momentary pause had saved the lives of hundreds.²⁰¹

In order to convey the over-powering strength that Pratt believes that fear exerts he speaks of it as a fire that cannot be controlled: "The crimson source of human fears".²⁰² Again in order to emphasize the sense of security that possesses passengers, crew and spectators, as the Titanic

¹⁹⁹ E.J. Pratt, "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.66.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.66.

²⁰¹ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.85.

²⁰² Ibid., "Fire", p.96.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

213

sets out Pratt gives an image of fear as a prisoner of the land; the vastness and the mighty power of the ship had "assigned to the dry earth the custody of fears".²⁰³ Then in an image of similar impact fear is spoken of as an illusion:

So suave the fool-proof sense of life that fear
Had like the unforeseen become a mere
Illusion--vanquished by the towering height of funnels.²⁰⁴

This unreality of fear with its undernote of deception or delusion occurs very frequently in "The Titanic". It is the fear that is allied with Fate:

And those rockets--three!
More urgent even than a tapping key,
And more immediate as a protocol
To a disaster.....
More a parody
Upon the tragic summons of the sea;
Than the real script of unacknowledged fears.²⁰⁵

There are times when, by using an image of hope, the poet indicates that fear can enslave:

The slow unreasoned alternation of the sleet,
With hurrying phantoms of the hail and snow,
The grey sterility of hope
With each life boat gone.²⁰⁶

In a submerged image of fear we find its terrible power to carve and sculpture lines of care upon the face of a woman who waits for a loved one during a night of storm. The chisel of fear cuts the lines upon human flesh with as great precision

²⁰³ E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.102.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.116.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.117.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.155.

as the ocean waves fashion the cliffs: but fear does not need "a thousand years" to work its havoc:

It took the sea a thousand years,
A thousand years to trace
The granite features of this cliff,
In crag and scarp and base.
It took the sea an hour one night,
An hour of storm to place
The sculpture of those granite seams
Upon a woman's face.²⁰⁷

Pratt at times expresses his belief that fear may be innocuous --may even be promotive of some beneficial purpose such as the combined force of hopes and fears that surpasses "availing prayer" and that may have the power to deter from ignoble action or even spur on to glorious deed; an interesting example of this latter type of fear is found in "The Iron Door" hope and fear is tuned in with the scale of music which falls upon the ears of those who await before "This vast inexorable door."

A music which the earth has only known
In the drab hours of its emptiness,
Or in the crisis of a fiery stress
Fell on my ear
In broken chord and troubled undertone.
For in this scale were tragic dreams
Awaiting unfulfilled decrees,
Some brighter than the purest gleams
Of seraphic ecstasies;
And some with hopes and fears
Which ran their piling way
Beyond the boundaries of availing prayer
To dim-illuminated reaches where the froze,
Dumb faces of despair
Gazed at their natural mirror in the door.²⁰⁸

207 E.J. Pratt, "Erosion", p.203.

208 Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.213.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

215

Fear has caused "the broken chord" and "the troubled undertone" and the fear of the unknown "awaiting unfulfilled decrees" gives to the faces gazing at the door the appearance of terror and robs the hearts of courage and trust.

Pratt believes that fear is part of a child's nature, given in order to inspire confidence and fortitude. The child by overcoming and conquering fear builds up a trust necessary to meet the struggles of earth and to change what might otherwise become a weak and puerile character into one that is virile and strong. Fear may thus be a disciplining factor which serves as a chastening agent. Imagery of child life does not occur frequently in the poetry of Pratt, but of the images that we do have none are more vivid than those of the "boy of ten" who overcame his natural fear of the icy waters, became a little man, and who willingly offered life for life and purchased the privilege of safety for "a Magyar woman and her child";²⁰⁹ and of the other little boy "standing, anxious-eyed, so small against the drift of space," searching for "his father's face, with an unvoiced appeal" wanting now the Almighty protection of an immortal soul as he had in an earthly-childhood day besought an earthly father to restore life to a water-spaniel that had been "crushed beneath an engine-wheel".²¹⁰ In the one case as in the other we are

²⁰⁹ E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.123.

²¹⁰ Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.213.

given child imagery of natural fear conquered and virility of soul established. There are many images of youthful fear having been overcome and of trust regaining once more its place in a soul that had been shaken by doubt.

Imagery of Grace

In this section of the thesis will be considered the images of goodness, virtue, love, reverence, and religion. Good and evil are latent qualities in all human kind and only with cautious circumspection are we enabled to disentangle the threads of virtue and vice that run through the fabric of life.

Each man's life jostles the lives of countless other men and women along life's way and the encounter is for weal or woe. No man comes to the end of his days devoid of influence on the lives of others--no life is a purely personal or private affair. Much of our influence upon the lives of others is not our direction or government but rather the results in other lives are the reflections of the virtues in our own:

Echoes of our living ring down the valleys of the lives of others like the voices of distant bells, quietly, impartially, implacably, reaching out to the most secluded, almost forgotten hamlets of men. Our lives sweep through the lives of other men and women like wind over the waters of the sea, whipping up waves that lash their ways to distant shores. Our kindness, a sympathetic word from our lips, are seen and heard,

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

217

imitated, and in turn are fresh breezes dissipating the selfishness of other lives.²¹¹

It is because Pratt is firmly convinced of and makes known through his poetry this participation of all creatures in world government, this formal cause which for all its indirectness is by no means ineffective, that his imagery of goodness and virtue, that is his imagery of grace, both that which is direct and that which is submerged, becomes a potent force. The wholesome happiness of innocence is found in the imagery of a little frightened bird surrendering to the persistent kindness of a child:

But that third week! I do not know--
It's neither yours to tell nor mine--
Some understanding glance or sign
Had passed between them to and fro;
For never was her face so flushed,
Never so brilliant blue her eye
At any gift that I could buy
As at the news, when in she rushed
To tell us that the wren had come,
Right to her hand to get a crumb.²¹²

There is strong serenity stamped upon the face of the man who when a crisis had arisen had steeled himself to forego personal security and do that which conscience dictated was the virtue of the moment:

The boat was drawn up and the men stepped out
Back to the crowded stations with that free
Barter of life for life done with the grace
And air of a Castilian courtesy.²¹³

²¹¹ Walter Farrell, "Creature's Work in World Government" in My Way of Life, London, 1941, Sheed & Ward, p.145.

²¹² E.J. Pratt, "The Child and The Wren", p.231.

²¹³ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.123.

The great sin of the world to-day is the sin of despair. Militant atheism has robbed men of faith and destroyed their hope. When hope is gone, violence and selfishness rules the world. That is why the world of to-day is plunged into a maelstrom of strife and confusion. A world without hope is a frustrated world seeking happiness in the perishable trinkets of time; this ceaseless and ineffective striving for happiness where happiness cannot be found is a basic problem for which Pratt would give the solution. His imagery of goodness is found in the quiet happiness of an unselfish woman, who giving all and seeking nothing, yet possesses all things:

The will she made contained no room for strife,
For twisted words concerning gold or lands,
For all the wealth that she had saved from life
Was such as lay within her folded hands.
She would have been less rich with other store,
And we the poorer if she had not willed
Only her heart, and then gone out the door,
Leaving that cupboard on the latch and filled.²¹⁴

Pratt does not tire of his parade of goodness, of loveableness and of happiness in hearts that are hungry for the "justice of God" in a world satiated with power and injustice and greed and hate; in a word, a world that is mistakenly replacing the positive of virtue with the negative of vice. Pratt by the imagery of that which allures, rather than by didacticism or satiric comment (which he uses sparingly) points out goals which he hopes to prove are universally

²¹⁴ E.J. Pratt, "A Legacy", p.227.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

219

desirable because of their concrete reality. He would urge his reader to move toward these goals and to grasp that which will be lasting. One idea that the poet constantly sets forth in his poetry is that hardships often call forth virtue. This idea runs like a golden thread through the poetry. It is the thematic image of a triumph that is the result of justified struggle.

The volunteers that would rescue the Dunkirk soldiers had grown to maturity in a school of hardship--they had been taught that they must not count the cost if they would save the stricken:

Millenniums it had taken to make their stock,
Piltown hung on the frontals of their fathers,
They had lain as sacrifices
Upon the mortuary slabs of Stonehenge.
Their souls had come to birth out of their racial myths.
The sea was their school; the storm, their friend.²¹⁵

In another image we see virtue that irradiates and exalts; virtue that places a nimbus of authority upon what might otherwise be a deed or even a life of mediocre value in the eyes of men:

His massive stature courage never questioned,
His steady glance, the firmness of his voice,
And that strange nimbus of authority,
In some dim way related to their gods.²¹⁶

The pagan Indians though not enlightened by grace could nevertheless perceive the virtue and the innate goodness in

²¹⁵ E.J. Pratt, "Dunkirk", p.2.

²¹⁶ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.66.

the life of Echon.

Imagery of Love

Imagery of love like imagery of childhood, does not occur very frequently in the poetry of Pratt, but love is the motive force underlying all his images of strength. It is love, temporal and eternal, love for man and love for God that forms the thread of purpose throughout the entire poem "Brebeuf and His Brethren". It is love that inspired the Dunkirk rescue; and it is love for mankind and loyalty to daily duty that forms the motif of "the Roosevelt and the Antinoe". Pratt may not have written love lyrics as such, but a deep abiding love is patterned beneath the surface of most of his lyric and narrative and epic lines.

Love's wayward and uncertain character, its swift and soaring nature, as well as its shaping and transforming power, and its infiniteness may have to be sought in the submerged imagery of this poet, but it is a search that is rewarding.

Love grows, changes and develops in the poetry of Pratt; it is impossible, therefore, at any given time, to tell what it may become. It may be as gentle as "the sway of a hand" or as forceful and effective as "the heroic suasion of a rood:

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

221

But no Gennesaret of Galilee
 Conjured to its level by the sway
 Of a hand or a word's magic with this sea,
 Contesting with its iron-alien mood,
 Its pagan face, its own primordial way,
 The pale heroic suasion of a rood.²¹⁷

At other times in the poetry the love of earth may develop
 and expand into eternal love and "light abundant".

I had caught the sense
 Of life with high auroras and the flow
 Of wide majestic spaces,
 Of light abundant.²¹⁸

The growth of love may even be referred to as a
 sculptured ediface. The love of man for man was proven by
 Brebeuf in fort and bastion; was charted in geographical
 expansion "till the latitudes staggered the daring of the
 navigators"; but Brebeuf did not stop at temporal achieve-
 ments, his love for God went still further he erected:

A different empire built upon the pulses
 Where even the sun and moon and stars revolved
 Around a Life and a redemptive Death.²¹⁹

The intangible and elusive as well as the fleeting and
 wavering qualities of love are brought out by likening it to
 a shadow or to a name written upon the sand within reach of
 the waves: "But one alone might quell this storm to-night,/
 And were he now this moment at the door,/ His eyes would
 clear the shadows from this light/ His voice put laughter in

217 E.J. Pratt, "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.152.

218 Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.220.

219 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.81.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

222

the billet's roar?²²⁰ Love, intense and undying, puts reality into shadow; and with laughter expells all fear. The magic tracery of love although apparently so fragile is beyond the reach of the waves of time:

He stooped, and with a leisured hand,
He wrote in casual tracery
Her name upon the flux of sand.
The waves beat up and swiftly spun
A silver web at every stride;
He watched the long, thin fingers run
The letters back into the tide.
But she had written where the tide
Could never its grey waters fling;
She watched the longest wave subside
Ere it could touch the lettering.²²¹

An image of the swift and mounting or soaring quality of love is found in the imagery of the Jesuits scaling the mountain peaks of Loyola. This instance proves that Pratt is able to take an ordinary or conventional, or even a hackneyed expression, play with it, and finally by some magic touch, by a difference of setting, an intensification of feeling or even a slight shift of words re-create and entirely transform it:

The Will and the Cause in their triumph survived.
Loyola's mountains, sublime at their summits,
Were scaled to the uttermost peaks.²²²

The transforming quality of love as well as its stamping or shaping power is sometimes suggested by imagery, especially

220 E.J. Pratt, "The Weather Glass", p.201.

221 Ibid., "The Flood-Tide", p.188-89.

222 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.93.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

223

by the imagery of mother-love or filial-love:

One whom I knew so well,--endeared
To me by all the natural ties which birth
And life and much-enduring love impose.²²³

And in another poem we find the imagery of the purchase price, wherein the pattern stamped is found upon the face of another mother whose love would erase the traces of sin from the soul of her child:

Appeared upon a woman's face,
Eroded with much perishing.

Why all the purchase of her pain,
And all her love could not atone
For that incalculable stain;
Why from that tortuous stream,--
Flesh of her flesh, bone of her bone,--
Should issue forth a Cain.²²⁴

The "infinity" of certain emotions and virtues is portrayed by the indirection of some of Pratt's images. Love and honour cannot be charted with the ordinary graphs of time, nor measured in the scale of common ounces. Pratt indicates that to attempt such a procedure would be a futile boast prompted by the extravagant claims of love:

It was your boast before the darkness fell,
That you could measure all your love, and chart
The return of mine so surely as to tell
Both boundary and trespass in my heart.²²⁵

It might be argued that this view is that of a person speaking in character rather than Pratt's own; and to disprove

²²³ E.J. Pratt, "The Iron Door", p.215.

²²⁴ Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.217.

²²⁵ Ibid., "Blind", p.227.

our contention that for Pratt love, honour and loyalty are incommensurable a critic might quote one of the love images found in the poem written in loving tribute to a child who had been granted but one brief hour of life:

One who with a last embrace
 Could only cheat the earth to save
 The plunder for another grave.²²⁶

It is true that here and there one comes upon imagery of the futility of struggle and of the transitory power of love; but on the other hand, the infinity of love is suggested or implied so constantly and in so many different contexts, that the reader becomes firmly convinced that Pratt reveals his own intuitive view. We have already seen in the imagery of time that love alone of many precious things, beauty, youth, strength, and even life, does not come under the domination of time, but seems to elude and transcend it, for the infinite cannot be imprisoned by the finite. Love is apparently killed by time, only because it transcends time, for its spiritual and infinite essence cannot be confined within the limitations of a material world. So profound and sincere may be a mother's love that she gladly gives her child back to God, and thus shields it from the harshness and ingratitude that life would bring:

²²⁶ E.J. Pratt, "One Hour of Life", p.203.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

225

This little face will never know
Cut of wind or bite of snow.²²⁷

Honour is not portrayed in the imagery of Pratt in its usual currency of kingship or royalty; instead, we are given honour images both vivid and concise as well as extended and submerged in terms of loyalty and allegiance; as though man's better nature were more clearly etched upon a background of duty:

Three hundred thousand on the beaches,
Their spirit-level vision straining West!
A vast patience in their eyes.

And their struggle with hunger, thirst,
And the drug of sleep,
Had multiplied the famine in their cheeks
For England
By forty miles divided from her brood.²²⁸

This was their duty, "For England". Here we have an image of honour for country and loyalty that knows not surrender. Not less magnificent is this same honour when, all dangers past, the rescued and the rescuers sail:

Out of the range of the guns of Nieuport,
Away from the immolating blasts of the oil-tanks,
The flotillas of ships were met by flotillas of gulls
Whiter than the cliffs of Foreland.
Back to the River of London, to England,
Saved once again by the tread of her keels.²²⁹

Honour seems to be the dominant in "Brebeuf and His Brethren"; it is not expressed through any one single group of images,

227 E.J. Pratt, "One Hour of Life", p.203.

228 Ibid., "Dunkirk", p.1.

229 Ibid., "Dunkirk", p.11.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

227

or in images that fall under any one single heading, but rather it is found in the action itself, and is the background of the poem reinforced by a number of images taken from many groups all illustrating or stressing this one virtue. This sensation of magnanimity is in itself the symbol of the whole theme, the theme of honour. No longer is routine of deed and verbal vows worthy of the manhood of France. Zeal is enkindled at hearth and altar. There is no note of compulsion but "with the sound of bugles from the Roman catacombs, the saints come back in their incarnate forms" and the noblesse oblige of loyal citizens of earth and prospective citizens of Heaven urges even wayward wills to "reshape for the world" the "City of God". Vincent of Paul with his galley slaves; Francis of Sales, Augustine, Thomas a Kempis, Theresa and John of the Cross are but the precursors of Xavier who at Montserrat Abbey accepted his Captain's commission to lead a mighty army the code of which was honour.²³⁰ Brebeuf, one of the most valiant volunteers, in that army was conscripted because of honour:

Voices spoke aloud unto his ear
And to his heart--Per ignem et per aquam.²³¹

No human command could sway a man of this caliber, but the dictates of honour loyalty and allegiance could not be ignored:

²³⁰ E.J. Pratt, see "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.37.

²³¹ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.38.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

228

The vows were deep he laid upon his soul:
 "I shall be broken first, before I break them."²³²

Brebeuf was a descendent of a long line of noble ancestry.
 He was a son, whose forebears had ever been dedicated to
 duty:

The oath Brebeuf was taking had its root
 Firm in his generation of descent.
 The family name was known to chivalry--
 In the Crusades; at Hastings; through the blood
 Of the English Howards; called out on the rungs
 Of the siege ladders; at the castle breaches;
 Proclaimed by heralds at the lists, and heard
 In Council Halls:--the coat-of-arms a bull
 In black with horns of gold on a silver shield.
 So on that toughened pedigree of fibre
 Were strung the pledges.²³³

Brebeuf never allowed his allegiance to God and country to
 slacken or his courage to abate. Never could dishonour stain
 his record:

Three years of that apprenticeship had won
 The praise of his Superior and no less
 Evoked the admiration of Champlain.
 That soldier, statesman, navigator, friend,
 Who had combined the brain of Richelieu
 With the red blood of Cartier and Magellan,²³⁴

Later during a four year's respite in France temptations came
 to lower the flag of honour, to fight under less glorious
 colours. Pratt in a contrast of imagery tells of this choice:

²³² E.J. Pratt, "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.38.

²³³ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.39.

²³⁴ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.43.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

229

Brebeuf was swung--between two homes; in one was peace
 ----- The daily and vicarious offering
 On which no hand might dare lay sacrilege,
 But in the other would be broken altars
 And broken bodies of both Host and priest.
 Then of which home, the son? From which the exile?²³⁵

Once again it is honour that determines the choice, never
 would the flag be lowered: With his own blood Brebeuf wrote
 his last vow--/ "Lord Jesus!/ I make this pledge to serve
 Thee all my life/ In the Society of Jesus--never/ To serve
 another than Thyself. Hereby/ I sign this promise in my
 blood, ready/ To sacrifice it all as willingly/ As now I
 give this drop." -- Jean de Brebeuf²³⁶ The honour theme runs
 through the entire poem, sometimes as a golden thread making
 possible days that would otherwise be dark and dreary; and
 sometimes as a crimson thread of suffering and death: "The
 western missions were held together by a scarlet thread"; and
 at length in image splendor Pratt tells his reader that the
 very honour became contagious:

The indians showed the world that native metal
 Could take the test as nobly as the French.²³⁷

Who had taught them with:

A speech more eloquent to capture souls:
 It is his scars, his mutilated hands.
 "Only show us," the neophytes exclaim,
 The wounds, for they teach better than our tongues
 Your faith, for you have come again to face
 The dangers."²³⁸

235 E.J. Pratt, "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.44.

236 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.44.

237 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.77.

238 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.77.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

230

Countless images might be given to show that the poet has read aright the motive force of the action on this story--honour is the sole incentive for danger and for death. Yet it is not deemed necessary to multiply quotations, which but repeat the honour theme. It may not seem out of place to repeat here what Rosamund Tuve has said of the strength of thematic imagery: "All poems use figurative language, and all say what they mean through images, but only certain kinds organize themselves with exquisite economy around great central figurative conceptions."²³⁹ In this poem Pratt does not allow the reader to forget in a single stanza that honour is the theme, the raison d'être of the supreme offering of a man, who gladly gives his all. One further citation may be given to prove that honour triumphed to the very end and astonished the pagan captors, who knew not honour, but its substitute, endurance: "Endurance is a code among the braves, and impassivity."²⁴⁰ They are thrilled by the greater strength and impassivity that honour imparts:

Speech they could stop for they girdled his lips,
 But never a moan could they get. Where was the source
 Of his strength, the home of his courage, that topped the
 Of their braves, and even out-fabled the lore of their ^{best}
 legends?²⁴¹

²³⁹ Rosamund Tuve, op.cit., p.4.

²⁴⁰ E.J. Pratt, "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.78.

²⁴¹ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.92.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

231

This imagery of supreme endurance upon a framework of honour is followed by the most sacred and muted accents of the entire poem, the source of this strength and the grail of this honour is high-lighted by its spiritual context:

Nor yet in the words
 Loyola wrote on a table of lava-stone
 In the cave of Manresa--not in these the source--
 But in the sound of invisible trumpets blowing
 Around two slabs of board, right-angled, hammered
 By Roman nails and hung on a Jewish hill.²⁴²

This is the triumph of honour. In the stress and strain the flag was not lowered. Loyalty spurred on the lagging steps, and illumined ideals that tended to grow dim--honour brought out the native grandeur of the human soul.

The imagery of honour and loyalty in this poem does not depend upon metaphor and simile alone--more often the submerged symbol is almost obscured in its matrix of narrative accumulations, sometimes it presents a double meaning with perfect sureness and speed, yet through it all the symbol remains entirely unambiguous and pure; that the reader may watch the images and symbols infallibly develop many complexities that had not been suspected, in a pattern which they do not provide, but follow. Professor Rosamund Tuve has traced out many image themes in the poetry of Milton and she tells us:

E.J. Pratt, "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.93.

To the student of imagery watching the operation of a symbol with manifold powers, through a long and complicated work, no impression is more powerful than that he receives of a symbol's sureness and dependability. It does not lie, never has to be excused for inconsistency or incoherence, but retains a purity and translucence which make symbolic imagery the foe of obscurity.²⁴³

As the reader follows the image theme through the poem, the conviction grows that this is not the result of calculated subtleties on the part of the author, but it is a true symbol's profound but stubbornly orderly relation to the honour and the loyalty which it presents in this context.

Imagery of Religion

From the richness of the Bible, from tradition, from the liturgy, and from ritual Pratt borrows a wealth of illustration for his ideas and emotions. Biblical events he sometimes abstracts from their proper setting and employs in different context and with other signification to illustrate his thought. Only by recalling the story, so simply described by St. Mathew, of Christ calming the tempest does the reader fully understand the poetic imagery of man's impotency when the angry waves dashed against the Roosevelt; St. Matthew has told the story thus:

²⁴³ Rosamund Tuve, op.cit., p.152.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

233

And behold a great tempest arose in the sea,
 So that the boat was covered with waves,
 But He was asleep.
 And they came to Him and awakened Him
 Saying: Lord, save us, we perish.
 And Jesus saith to them: Why are ye
 Fearful, O ye of little faith?
 Then rising up He commanded the winds,
 And the sea, and there came a great calm.²⁴⁴

In the imagery of Pratt we have:

But no Gennesaret of Galilee
 Conjured to its level by the sway
 Of a hand or a word's magic, was this sea.²⁴⁵

Frequently the poet stresses the nobility of human suffering by vivifying his imagery with direct references to the Passion of Christ:

And bearing His own cross, He went forth
 to that place which is called Calvary,
 But in Hebrew, Golgotha.²⁴⁶

Then Pratt makes use of the difficulties of the Calvary-climb to vivify and give meaning to the sufferings of the missionaries in New France:

Your loneliness in travel
 Will be relieved by angels overhead;
 Your silence will be sweet for you will learn
 How to commune with God; rapids and rocks
 Are easier than the steeps of Calvary.²⁴⁷

Pratt strikes the note of the Passion again at the close of the poem:

244 St. Matthew chapter viii, verses 24-26.

245 E.J. Pratt, "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.152.

246 St. John, chapter xix, verse xvii.

247 E.J. Pratt, "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.58.

THE EMOTIONAL ELEMENT

234

Now three o'clock, and capping the height of the passion,
 Confusing the sacraments under the pines of the forest,
 Under the incense of balsam, under the smoke
 Of the pitch, was offered the rite of the font.²⁴⁸

It may be claimed that some of the images herein classed as "images of grace" are little more than "pious phrasings" and that they were not intended by the poet to be read figuratively but literally. The very sincerity of the poetry would belie such an assertion -- and it seems to the writer that the weakest of the images is yet sufficiently strong to substantiate the claim that Pratt is preeminently a Christian poet, and also to give sufficient grounds for a refutation to the claim put forth by some critics that Pratt's poetry is governed by a "secular humanism" that assumes a ceaseless conflict between man and nature; between the human hero, Christ, and the remorseless Fate, or God, and that he makes use of nature as a vehicle.

Pratt has an emotional faith in the orthodox Christ, and in the Christian creed as a whole, that he often enough rejects on rational, or supposedly rational grounds.²⁴⁹

It is the hope of the writer that this study of the imagery of Pratt will proclaim beyond any doubt that our Canadian poet is truly Christian. He is not a moralist per se, but his Christian philosophical ideas and ideals are clearly visible in image and in symbol, and although his poems are

²⁴⁸ E.J. Pratt, "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.91.

²⁴⁹ John Sutherland, op.cit., p.24.

almost entirely objective, in view and opinion, yet:

like a man who under stress of emotion will show no sign of it in eye of face, but will reveal it in some muscular tension, this poet unwittingly lays bare his own innermost likes and dislikes, observations and interests, associations of thought, attitudes of mind and beliefs, in and through the images, the verbal pictures he draws to illuminate something quite different."²⁵⁰

Pratt's faith in a Christian creed is emotional, but it is far more than emotional. That which the poet believes he at no time rejects on rational grounds. He may cloak his meaning in obscure concepts but this is mainly to give the idea of reverberation and reflection and to illustrate subtle and philosophic thought. There is deep thought hidden beneath the surface in the following poem:

Vast and immaculate! no pilgrim bands
In ecstasy before the Parian shrines,
Knew such a temple built by human hands,
With this transcendent rhythm in its lines;
Like an epic on the North Atlantic stream
It moved, and fairer than a Phidian dream.²⁵¹

The Sea-Cathedral not "built by human hands" brings to mind St. John's vision of the new and heavenly Jerusalem in the world transfigured by the Apocalypse:

And I, John, saw the holy city, the
new Jerusalem.²⁵²

Throughout the entire poem the terminology of the poet is decidedly Christian and even religious in tone. We find the

²⁵⁰ Caroline Spurgeon, *op.cit.*, p.4.

²⁵¹ E.J. Pratt, "The Sea-Cathedral". p.211.

²⁵² St. John, Apocalypse, ch.xxii, verse 2.

terms: cathedral, bells, belfries, spires, pilgrim bands, immaculate, ecstasy, shrines, temple not built by human hands, transcendent rhythm, fairer than a Phidian dream, rich gifts unknown to kings, and litany. A succeeding stanza develops still further the imagery of the New Jerusalem -- the city not built by human hands:

Gifts from the sea-gods and the sun who wrought
Cascades and rainbows; flung them in festoons
Over the spires, with emerald, amethyst,
Sapphire and pearl out of their fiery mist.²⁵³

Again in Apocalypse we come upon:

And the foundations of the wall of the city were
adorned with all manner of precious stones...
jasper.... sapphire....emerald....amethyst....
and the twelve gates are twelve pearls one to
each. And the street of the city was pure gold,
as it were transparent glass.²⁵⁴

Imagery of grace, or religious imagery is in evidence in many or most of the poems of Edwin John Pratt. The author's pre-occupation with "eschatology" as well as his deep and living faith in Christ is clearly perceived. By poetic imagery a touch of the Apocalypse can be transferred to twentieth century warfare. The social stress of our age is positive; rather than create a frustration negativism, it reaches depths of religious belief and asserts that every tragedy be it major or minor may be "redeemed by Christ in His aspect of Son of Man."²⁵⁵ In our age of crumbling values, war and

²⁵³ E.J. Pratt, "The Sea-Cathedral", p.211.

²⁵⁴ St. John, Apocalypse, ch.xxi verses 19-22.

²⁵⁵ John Sutherland, *op.cit.*, p.25.

cosmic destruction has quickened our sense of evil, we envisage sin as a wound that cannot be healed except by the application of Divine mercy. The dogma of the fall, man's original act of pride, and his subsequent weakened nature is given a new illumination in our atomic age. "Contemporary pressure forces us to acknowledge that the threatened blow to the cosmos can only be averted if the cross is truly the Cross, and if the human and understanding Christ is Son of God as well as Son of man."²⁵⁶ The imagery of Pratt conveys this conviction:

What a gulf between this and the hour,
Late in the simian-human day,
When nature kept her tryst
With the enfoldment of the star and flower--
When in her sacrificial way
Judaea blossomed with her Christ!²⁵⁷

Christ in this imagery is the pivot of history; in another image He is history's grail or goal:

The path lies through Gethsemane.²⁵⁸

A poet tends to draw his most vivid images from the things he knows best or in which he is most interested; Pratt's imagery from Biblical scenes, from Scripture, from liturgy and ritual is far more than a mere fanciful application or a pious phrasing -- His imagery is the outward sign of the inward belief of the poet in the "sacrificial way of Judaea" and

²⁵⁶ John Sutherland, *op.cit.*, p.25.

²⁵⁷ E.J. Pratt, "The Highway", p.229.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, "From Stone to Steel", p.20.

his earnest exhortation that the cure for all sin and evil is found by advancing along the road to the fashioning place of the crown of justice; and this road lies "through Gethsemane". It has been said with justification that:

Every secret of a writer's soul, every experience of his life, every quality of his mind, is written large in his works, yet we require critics to explain the one and biographers to expound the other.²⁵⁹

It is the sincere hope of the writer that by the present prolonged study of the key images and of the theme images of the poetry of Pratt, that the readers of his epic, lyric and narrative poems may come to know the poet better and be the better enabled to interpret the core of each poetic pattern.

²⁵⁹ Virginia Woolf, in Orlando, quoted by Caroline Spurgeon, p.1.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE INTELLECTIVE ELEMENT

As was stated in an earlier section the distinguishing feature of the image is its wholeness. Logical relation, emotion, and concrete perception merge inextricably so that the poet finds a way of giving his thought at once a concrete body, an imaginative life, and an emotional warmth. Florence Marsh in her penetrating analysis of the imagery of Wordsworth tells us:

Imagery, then, is the central core of both language and poetry. In it the sensuous, the emotional, and the intellectual merge, and the vision of life is whole.¹

In chapters two and three a study has been made of the sensory element and of the emotional element of the imagery. In this chapter the effort and the interest of the writer will be concentrated on the intellectual cogency of the poet's ideas and attitudes. We shall get a clearer perception of his fundamental ideas about reality, and also become aware of his ideals and aspirations and their possible attainment. In other words, this chapter will tell us just how Pratt looks at the world, it will outline his specific cast of mind, it will endeavor to manifest his ideals and show forth the way he adheres to them---for imagery is true and vivid evidence because it is born of emotion, in which the imagination presents to the intellect its proper food for thought.

¹ Florence Marsh, *op.cit.*, p.19.

This intellectual element of the imagery of a poet might be discovered and illustrated in many different ways. The method that has been chosen for this study may almost be termed one of blending:

A true poet must partake in part of a fundamental, common reservoir of inspiration which renders the poetry of ancient Greece, of medieval England, of France and Germany, and of the Elizabethans still delightful.²

To begin with we may accept the fact that Edwin John Pratt is a man of books. He has a deep love for literature, and finds happiness in imparting to his readers his own vast store of knowledge. His poetry that invites comparison with the classical past must be realistic and specific, it may not be over-generalized or vague. Even a casual reading of Pratt's poetry will reveal that the author holds allegiance to literature that was given to the world before the rise of the aristocratic school of Dryden and Pope. His poetry is not derivative but original; never the less it does partake of the timeless, "the present moment in the past." We must acknowledge that it patterns much more closely the models given to the world before its new sophistication under the influence of the modern French culture, than that which has been given to the world since then.

² Henry W. Wells, op.cit., p.61.

Mythology

An examination of Pratt-imagery drawn directly from the literatures of times and places other than our own twentieth-century-Canada results in the not very surprising conclusion that the poet is a lover of the classics and that his memory and imagination turns often and naturally to the wealth of Greek and Latin mythology, history and literature that he has studied and read. Professor Henry W. Wells also notes this leaning toward the very foundations of our literature: "He calls us back to elementals as do the popular poets of Elizabethan days, of the Middle Ages, and of ancient Greece, from Hesiod and Homer, on to AEschylus and Aristophanes."³ Pratt is also on familiar terms with Vergil, Horace, Petrarch, Ovid, Dante, Goethe, Catullus, Pindar, as well as with great scientists, astronomers, and astrologers; with great poets of lyric and drama, and also with the Church Fathers. In general it is imagery from Greek and Roman mythology that is used to reinforce his tenaciously held moral ideas and his artistic yet sincere aspirations. When the writer herein claims that Pratt in his imagery has given generously of his knowledge of the classics, no slightest claim is made that the modern poet be equated with the great masters of antiquity. Pratt, conscious of and modestly confident in, his own particular style does not attempt

³ Henry W. Wells, op.cit., p.62.

the almost impossible feat of reproducing that of another. This poet's aim in poem after poem has been nothing more ambitious than by vivid imagery to make the classics and the old myths live once more for the reader, and to pay contemporary tribute to the eminent writers from whom our knowledge of the myths comes. The poet makes no attempt to decorate his source, he strives to keep it close to its original, in the hope that the reader, like the author, will acknowledge the basic strength of our literature which has been proven by more than a two thousand years' test to be immortal. The permanency of such associations is beautifully expressed by Coleridge:

The intelligible forms of ancient poets,
 The fair humanities of old religion,
 The Power, the Beauty, and the Majesty,
 That had their haunts in dale or piny mountain,
 Of forest, by slow stream, or pebbly spring,
 Or chasms and watery depths; all these have vanished
 They live no longer in the faith of reason;
 But still the heart doth need a language; still
 Doth old instinct back the old names,
 Spirits or gods that used to share this earth
 With man as with their friend; and at this day
 'Tis Jupiter who brings whate'er is great,
 And Venus who brings everything that's fair.⁴

Mythology is the dust of former beliefs. "It is man's first unaided attempt to find out about God. It is the effort of reason struggling to know about the Infinite."⁵ That Pratt

⁴ Coleridge, quoted by Thomas Bulfinch in Age of Fable, Philadelphia, David MacKay, 1898, in "Author's Preface" p.viii.

⁵ D.G. Brinton, "The Myths of the New World" quoted in Age of Fable op.cit., p.ix.

wishes to communicate the heroic myths made immortal in the Iliad and the Odyssey by Homer is perceived in his imagery:

Some picturesque immortal label
That lifts a story into fable,
Out of the myths of Uranus.⁶

This same myth is again emphasized in the collection of poems entitled "Titans" (1926). In the myth of Homer all the Titans, all except Atlas, Prometheus and Oceanus were confined in Tartarus. In Pratt also the parallel is clear:

Then changed its roots to demonize
The nature of its strength and size
With fictions out of Tartarus.⁷

The gigantic strength and power of "No.6000" is assured as the reader learns that,

Those giants of Vulcan, leather-skinned
Whose frightful stare monocular
Made mad the coursers of the wind,

Would have been terror-blind before
This forehead.⁸

Homer tells that Odysseus visits Erebus, a region ruled by Hades.

His body black as Erebus
Accorded with the hue of night.⁹

The words of Pratt express what the Greeks believed to lay back of the beginning of things. Night and Erebus for them were the children of Chaos:

⁶ E.J. Pratt, "No.6000", p.129.

⁷ Ibid., "No.6000", p.129.

⁸ Ibid., "No.6000", p.130.

⁹ Ibid., "No.6000", p.130.

At last, but how no one ever tried to explain, two children were born to this shapeless nothingness. Night was the child of Chaos and so was Erebus, which is also the unfathomable depth where death dwells.¹⁰

And again Pratt gives an image from the same myth:

A series of concentric waves which any fool
Might make by dropping stones within a pool,
Or an exploding bomb forever in flight
Bursting like hell through Chaos and Old Night.¹¹

Besides epic tales we also find the Greek drama of about the fifth century portrayed in the imagery of Pratt. Reminiscent of the happy fate of "Iphigenia among the Taurians" brought about by deus ex machina we have:

Now with his armoured carapace
On head and belly, back and breast,
The Taurian prepared to face
The blurring stretches of the west.¹²

It is the third century Greek poet, Apollonius and his "Quest of the Golden Fleece," whom Pratt recalls to the reader with the imagery:

And Neptune with her prong to meet us
On some point on the shores of Cetus,
And bid them superintend a cargo
Of fresh sea-food upon the Argo.¹³

Many more individual images might be cited to prove Pratt's knowledge of and interest in the classical writers of the Attic Age, but it is believed that multiplicity of

¹⁰ Edith Hamilton, Mythology, New York, Little, Brown & Co. 1940, p.63.

¹¹ E.J. Pratt, "The Truant", p.268.

¹² Ibid., "No.6000", p.131.

¹³ Ibid., "The Depression Ends", p.260.

illustration is not necessary. However, besides the individual images drawn from classical mythology Pratt also depends upon the thematic imagery that with twentieth century matrix conceals the AEschylean conception of "hubris" and its goal in tragedy. The old mines of irresponsible mirth which so richly abound in the scenes of Aristophanes, the epic vein of Beowulf, the crusading Song of Roland, and the spiritual note of Sacred Scripture are all found in Pratt's poetry. It is as though he realizes that "the readiest key to poetic immortality lies in a spiritual democracy linking not only many minds of one age but many cycles of time."¹⁴

Accuracy of detail, the presence of the element of Fate, the hubris that proves fatal and unrepentant in "The Titanic" has led more than one critic to believe that the contemporary poem parallels the tragedy of "the house of Atreus", Pratt's successful and highly rigorous fidelity to outstanding ~~traditions~~ of dramatic poetry leads him to build in like fashion even more accurately than he knows. Precisely because he observes none of the outer forms or pedantic rules of classical art, he enters more fully into its spirit.

Irving Babbitt approves thus:

According to Aristotle poetry does not portray life literally but extricates the deeper or ideal truth from the flux of circumstance. True classicism does not rest on the observance of rules or the imitation

¹⁴ Henry W. Wells, op.cit., p.182.

of models, but on an immediate insight into the universal ----- The true classicist gets his truth through the veil of fiction.¹⁵

The essence of classical drama is integral with our human nature, it is deathless and vital. Professor Wells has also noted the Agamemnon parallel: "This AEschylus from Newfoundland is essentially the tragic poet, a legitimate though in no sense an equal heir of the AEschylus of Salamis".¹⁶

Although the writer of this thesis is convinced that Pratt was far more interested in the Christian implications of the poem, and although its actual symbolic interpretation is beyond the issue of this paper, the acknowledgment is made here that since we are dealing with imagery, and we have proclaimed that images are documentations of fact, certainly the images of the Agamemnon story seem to find more than one parallel in Pratt-poetry. Perhaps that is because Pratt, though not in any formal sense a philosophical poet, yet is implicitly a moralist, every line that he has written is coloured by his own sane philosophy of life; and he recognizes that Aeschylus deals with some of the profound and ethical problems that seek solution: the nature of the gods, the problem of evil and patriotism as well as the problem of human responsibility. The credo of Aeschylus seems to be: The gods are supreme and just. Man should submit to their

¹⁵ Irving Babbitt, Rousseau and Romanticism, Meridan Books, New York, 1955, pp.26-27.

¹⁶ Henry W. Wells, op.cit., p.76.

decrees. Guilt is inheritable, but man has a personal and individual responsibility. Pride, murder, and other crimes must be expiated by suffering which brings wisdom to the sufferer. Considered thus Agamemnon is at base a moral tragedy, whose moral code coincides with Pratt's Christian interpretation. Dr. Trawick analyzes the same thought thus: "Nemesis is not a personification of the jealousy of heaven, but a symbol of the victory of the moral law over passion!"¹⁷ This dictum of Dr. Tarwick should remove all doubt from the mind of a reader of "The Titanic" and make its "dual personality" more easily accepted; and its kinship with the pagan myth more easily reconciled with its Christian and moral standards. Briefly the similarities of imagery of the one tragedy are herein considered with respect to the other.

Pride had hardened the house of Atreus into false and impious security. Agamemnon, Clytemnestra and Aegisthus are possessed by fatal arrogance; and submerged in luxury they fall blinded by pride.

Long current among men an old saying
Runs that a man's prosperity
When grown to greatness
Comes to the birth, does not die childless--
His good luck breeds for his house
Distress that shall not be appeased.¹⁸

¹⁷ Buckner B. Trawick, World Literature, "Aeschylus - Thought and Technique," New York, Barnes and Noble, 1955, p.65.

¹⁸ Henry W. Wells, op.cit., quotation from "Homer", p.74.

The prosperity of man in the modern poem is found in the vivid Titanic-imagery: "Twelve courses on the cards might well measure themselves against Falstaffian juices!"¹⁹ or again in prosperous setting: "Gray-templed Caesars of the world's Exchange swallowed liqueurs and coffee as they sat under the Georgian carved mahogany."²⁰ or in the drowsy daze of satiety: "By three the silence that proceeds from the night-caps and the soporific hum of the engines was far deeper than a town's."²¹ or the prosperity that imparted the over-confidence that could snuff out the loyalty of a pledge: "Stage time, real time-- a woman and a man, entering a play within a play, dismiss the pageant on the ocean with a kiss."²² And this prosperity like unto the Agamemnon type does not die childless it begets: "We've struck an iceberg"²³ This was the common tragedy, but besides this there was the particular tragedy. The crime of Atreus and Thyestes is the single motif of the Agamemnon drama. The pride of builder and possessor of the luxury liner, "a city in itself" is the single flaw which causes the tragedy of "The Titanic!" The scene of the drama is the stately palace at Mycenae, the scene of the poem is the stately ship. Image almost matches image both in grandeur and in power. The tragedy is

19 E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.102.

20 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.103.

21 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.104.

22 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.111

23 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.115.

24 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.116.

introduced with the news of the capture of Troy and the beacon fires that flash the news from peak to peak along Aegean headlands, the narrative poem has for prelude the news that a race has been won: "Mind and will in open test with steel and time had run the first lap of the schedule and had won."²⁵ and then the preparations for the maiden voyage. It is true to Greek thought, because to Aeschylus the city is the supreme entity--and the collapse of the "ship of state" is the real tragedy; with Pratt there enters now the Christian trend, the ship sinks but Christianity triumphs and this has been beautifully expressed by John Sutherland:

The "door" swings open far enough to convince the poet that a universal destruction can only be followed by a universal re-birth. The image of Christ's mercy hovering over the sacrifices of the passengers is carried over into the image of Christ's judgment. The inrush of exultant feeling, at the climax of the tragedy, stems from the deep-seated conviction, that Christ and the Father are one, that Justice and Mercy are the two sides of the same coin and that the rendering unto God of the things that are God's must ultimately mean the rendering of everything.²⁶

The tragedy of Fate and the Christian surrender are threaded together in the imagery of Pratt, they are like beads of modern thought strung on a classic chain and then presented to the reader. This poem has been singled out for reference but in many of the shorter and perhaps lesser poems of Pratt there is also this duality of source, the ancient image in

²⁵ E.J. Pratt, "The Titanic", p.98.

²⁶ John Sutherland, op.cit., p.53.

the modern setting, that bespeaks the universality of the poet and the intellectual impact of his imagery.

That we might see the real in the apparent Pratt has given us other images too vivid to require lengthy explanation: The blacksmith found by the water-witches and who seemed to be the one whom they needed for their experiment:

Proved his breed to be of land and water,
Last of great Neptune's stock that sprung
From Vulcan's union with his daughter.²⁷

And again:

When lo!
Answering the summons of her name
Fresh from the surf of Neptune came
Aurora to the Portico.²⁸

When the poet proposes the Gargantuan and materialistic feast in the heavens, the couriers sent to invite the guests are

Mercury, Atlas, Hercules,
Each bearing a capacious pack,
Would be the couriers of the feast.²⁹

And in the same poem the entire earth would be gleaned to offer contribution to the feast of the needy:

I'll communize the total yields
Of summer in the Elysian fields.³⁰

From Norse Mythology which commemorates the Valkyries, the daughters of Odin, carrying the slain to Valhalla we find this imagery in one of Pratt's shorter poems:

27 E.J. Pratt, "The Witches' Brew", p.241.

28 Ibid., "The Depression Ends", p.264.

29 Ibid., "The Depression Ends", p.260.

30 Ibid., "The Depression Ends", p.261.

The hosts were led by a Valkyrian hand
 To their abodes, accompanied by the massing
 Of amber clouds touched with armorial red.³¹

Lest the point seem to be belaboured that Pratt has exaggerated his Homeric derivation, it will be profitable to note also the images that reflect Roman thought. Virgil and Ovid both influence Pratt's imagery with a Roman rendition in such names as: Pluto, Mars, Apollo, Mercury, and Neptune:

In his vast belly was a pit

 Evolved from no Plutonian forge.
 The tender, like a slave, that followed,
 Conveyed bitumen to the gorge.³²

In an effort to describe the great strength of the locomotive which symbolizes machinery's usefulness as well as its destructive power the reader is given the image:

This forehead which, had it been known
 In Greek or Scandinavian lore,
 Had turned the hierarchs to stone,
 Had battered down the Martian walls,
 Reduced to dust Jove's arsenals,
 Or rammed the battlements of Thor.³³

Phaethon was one of Ovid's best stories, vividly told and with details that heightened the effect. In one of its translations we read:

In the car Phaethon was wrapped with thick smoke and heat as from a furnace, full, fiery. Looking down from Olympus the gods saw that they must act quickly if the world was to be saved. Jove seized his thunder-bolt and hurled it at the rash, impatient driver.³⁴

31 E.J. Pratt, "A Prairie Sunset", p.225.

32 Ibid., "The 6000", p.130.

33 Ibid., "The 6000", p.131.

34 Edith Hamilton, op.cit., p.133.

The hurling of the thunderbolt of Jove is frequently referred to in Pratt.

Not only to the gods but also to the artists, writers and sculptors who have handed down these myths would Pratt pay tribute. The sculptor, Phidias, constructed the Parthenon and then adorned it with the statues of Minerva and Jupiter. In "The Sea-Cathedral" we are given the image of another Parthenon, this time far fairer than it would be if it were constructed of Parian marble:

Vast and immaculate! No pilgrim bands,
In ecstasy before the Parian shrines,
Knew such a temple built by human hands,
With this transcendent rhythm in its lines;
Like an epic on the North Atlantic stream
It moved, and fairer than a Phidian dream.³⁵

In the poem "The Cachalot" we find a blending of antiquity which represents both the Greek and the Roman trends of thought. This poem has been considered by some critics as the greatest whale poem in our language: "The greatest poem on the whale in the English language even as Moby Dick is the greatest prose written about the whale."³⁶ A more controversial tribute has been given to the same poem by H.W. Wells:

The Newfoundlander sees on the waves not a mystical
but a very real whale, clad in ample beauty and
splendour but never shrouded in metaphysical light.³⁷

³⁵ E.J. Pratt, "The Sea-Cathedral", p.213.

³⁶ W.R. Benet, quoted by John Sutherland, op.cit., p.55.

³⁷ H.W. Wells, op.cit., p.163.

Both these critics and others who seriously consider the poem acknowledge greatness but do not concentrate on the imagery. "The Cachalot" has supreme examples of imagery and many of these images may be considered in a study of the intellectual appeal of imagery. The context in which the poet's imagination is working is well established by such images as: Vulcan's anvil;/ Gorgontian stare;/ Acherontic flood;/ and Titan and Olympian God.³⁸ Such images reveal the intellectual element as well as the realistic surface that proclaim the poem to be far more than a study of "cetacean lore".³⁹

In each illustration Pratt did not merely retain names but also endeavored by context to portray the ideal personalities which the names represented for he realized, as did other great poets, that without a knowledge of mythology much of the best literature of our own time cannot be appreciated. In earlier years Shakespeare also frequently made use of mythological implications:

Thou almost mak'st me waver in my faith
To hold opinion with Pathagoras
That sould of animals infuse themselves
Into the trunks of men.⁴⁰

Wordsworth, too developed his view of Grecian thought; and in more than one instance depended upon a mythological image

³⁸ E.J. Pratt, "The Cachalot", pp.169-182.

³⁹ Ibid., "The Cachalot", p.169.

⁴⁰ Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice, p.185.

THE INTELLECTIVE ELEMENT

254

to convey his meaning:

And sometimes intermixed with stirring horns
Of the live deer, or goat's depending beard;
These were the lurking Satyrs, a wild brood
Of gamssome deities; or Pan himself,
The simple shepherd's awe-inspiring god.⁴¹

Byron depended upon like image when he called Rome the
"Niobe of nations", or when he referred to the ancient
Persian rites of sacrifices performed on the mountain tops
"unspoiled by man":

A fit and unwall'd temple, there to seek
The Spirit, in whose honor shrines are weak
Upreared by human hands.⁴²

The poems of Milton abound in similar allusions. The short
poem *Comus* contains thirty such images. In the poetry of
Matthew Arnold we find:

And the Valkyries on their steeds went forth
Toward earth and fights of men,
And pick the bravest warriors out for death
Whom they bring back at night with them to heaven,
To glad the gods, and feast in Odin's Hall.⁴³

These illustrations are sufficient in number and kind to
prove that Pratt is not being too artificial, too figurative
or too decorative, when he goes to mythology for imagery.
These images forge another link in the chain that joins the
poetry of our contemporary poet not only to ancient lore but
to the men of letters in decades just previous to our own.

⁴¹ Wordsworth, "The Excursion", in *The Poetical Works of Wordsworth*, London: Oxford University Press, 1932, p.786.

⁴² Byron, *The Poetical Works of Lord Byron*, London: Frederick Warne, 1893, p.84.

⁴³ Arnold Matthew, "Thyrsis" in *English Literature and Its Backgrounds*, New York: The Dryden Press, 1949, p.591.

Pratt may not be of the stature of these poets but he is of their kind.

In imagery Pratt would also recall Roman philosophy and show his acquaintance with De Rerum Natura, a work containing some amazingly accurate guesses which have recently been developed into scientific theories about the atom, evolution, anthropology and biology all of which would be of deep interest to Pratt even if he could not accept the other tenets of belief of the Epicurean hedonist. Almost the entire theory of Lucretius, who advocated that true happiness could be found only by a removal of fear, is imaged forth in these words of Pratt:

And when, one day, grown conscious of your age,
While pondering an eolith,
We turned a human page
And blotted out a cosmic myth
With all its baby symbols to explain
The sunlight in Apollo's eyes,
Our rising pulses and the birth of pain,
Fear, and that fer-and-fungus breath
Stalking out nostrils to our caves of death--
That day we learned how to anatomize
Your body, calibrate your size
And set a mirror up before your face
To show you what you really were--a rain
Of dull Lucretian atoms crowding space.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ E.J. Pratt, "The Truant", p.268.

THE INTELLECTIVE ELEMENT

256

Astrology and Astronomy

Imagery from astronomy and astrology abounds throughout Pratt's poetry, not in mere reference but in realistic proclamation by context and allusion. We find the poet turning from the non-Christian senselessness which despises death to an acceptance of death which is made tolerable by belief. The poet seems impelled to go outside the human world to find what makes endurable an "order" that commands the death of the 'unripe' and the death of the consecrated. Pratt's excursions to the heavenly bodies for affirmation is intellectually sure and not in the least digressive. To prove his deep-set opposition to a mechanical robot kind of god devoid of human sympathy, and to prove man's passion for spiritual freedom combined with social justice the reader is given the imagery of human defiance to Power:

Before we came you had no name
 You did not know direction or your pace;
 We taught you all you ever knew
 Of motion time or space.
 We drew your mummu's through the Milky Way,
 Lassoed your comets when they went astray,
 Yoked Leo, Taurus, and your team of Bears.⁴⁵

In another poem the poet tells of the forecast that heralds in the age of radio, in imagery he portrays the unkindly reception given to this human intrusion by the planet gods whose rights were being usurped:

45 E.J. Pratt, "The Truant", p.267.

THE INTELLECTIVE ELEMENT

257

Out of the void they came
 To storm the base of the tower,
 To hammer the walls of the cell,
 And tap at the mullioned panes.
 Polaris, the scout of Orion,
 Was frigidly, jealously,
 Watching a speck on the frontier.⁴⁶

And Orion is not going to surrender to this atomic stranger
 without an explanation and without much complaining:

Nor would it be long he predicted,
 Before complaints would come from the stars,
 All the way from zenith to nadir,
 That their eyes had been blinded by grit.⁴⁷

Again while the gods are planning the destruction of man and
 man-made contrivances such as "The Titanic" Pratt with
 precision emphasizes the unconcern of the placid heavens,
 secure in the dream of victory:

The sky was motionless but the sea flung back
 With greater brilliance half the zodiac.
 As clear below as clear above, the Lion
 Far on the eastern quarter stalked the Bear:
 Polaris off the starboard beam--and there
 Upon the port the Dog-star trailed Orion.
 Capella was so close, a hand might seize
 The sapphire with the silver Pleiades;
 And farther south--a finger span,
 Swam Betelgeuse and red Aldebaran.
 Right through from east to west the ocean glassed
 The billions of that snowy caravan
 Ranging the highway which the Milkmaid passed.⁴⁸

Lines such as these might almost give rise to the suspicion
 that medieval and Renaissance habits are the necessary
 requirements for the readers of Pratt's poetry, such is not

⁴⁶ E.J. Pratt, "The Radio in the Ivory Tower", p.12.

⁴⁷ Ibid., "The Radio in the Ivory Tower", p.12.

⁴⁸ Ibid., "The Titanic", p.110.

the case, because the figurative and structural plan of the poems is not opposed to the 'logic' and to the intellectual and realistic functions that the images perform. Pratt's figures are not inventions. They can be found out about, a sovereign thing in an image; and the ways in which Pratt understood them and tried to communicate their symbolic meaning to the reader can gradually become part of our familiar experience. As we solve the lines we find the answer not only to what--

the images are but to what they were, and just where we must wear alien modes of thinking as if they were the sole garments of our own spontaneously responding minds, and we are much helped by this one constant, that the figures are of ancient birth.⁴⁹

Besides the images cited, there are also more compressed and concise images that in a single word or a couple of words reveal a whole mode of metaphorical thought but it is believed that a sufficient number have been given to illustrate the point that although "Pratt remains well in touch with the march of industrial democracy"⁵⁰ and does not cease to express concern about the great cultural problems of our age, he also has a cosmic interest in "the one constant", the image of antiquity that does much to make contemporary poetry traditional.

⁴⁹ Rosamund Tuve, op.cit., p.9.

⁵⁰ H.W. Wells, op.cit., p.183.

Historical Essence

Not alone in ancient lore, in the deeds of the mighty gods, is Pratt interested, even more vividly does he recount the historical facts of the centuries just preceeding our own, and also the current events which are found in the international struggles staged in Canadian setting. History is portrayed in his imagery.

The concern of the politicians who in pre-World War days would impart to their words an almost-animal strength in an effort to re-organize society without compulsion and bloodshed is seen in this image:

Churchill and Bevin have the floor,
Whipping snarling nouns and action-verbs
Out of their lairs in the lexicon.⁵¹

The courage of a 1914 generation was legitimate, it was the heritage of the sons of a Caractacus, a Boadicea and of a Celtic strength that was not drained as the years took their toll:

Peltdown hung on the frontals of their fathers. .
They had lain as sacrifices
Upon the mortuary slab of Stonehenge.

Caractus
Taking his toll of the invaders,
In his retreat from fens and hills.

Boadices
The storming of Londinum and Verulamium,
And the annihilation of the Roman Ninth.⁵²

51 E.J. Pratt, "Dunkirk", p.1.

52 Ibid., "Dunkirk", p.2.

THE INTELLECTIVE ELEMENT

260

In another image the reader is informed that Brebeuf of New France was of the lineage of warriors:

The family name was known to chivalry--
In the Crusades; at Hastings, through the blood
Of the English Howards.⁵³

Imagery shows that modern naval exploits will not be lacking in strategic valour because:

They(the forefathers) had swept the main,
With Hawkins and with Drake.⁵⁴

Personal pain can now be submerged in the common safety because in the days of yore there was a demand for stoic endurance:

They(the forefathers) had stifled their cries
In the cockpits of Trafalgar.⁵⁵

A spirit of Canadian valour is found in such imagery as:

Champlain, the symbol of exploring France,
Tracking the rivers to their lairs.⁵⁶

To prove that Brebeuf was not only lauded by his own Superiors but had won international esteem that will be honoured in history, the reader is given the imagery:

Brebeuf evoked the admiration of Champlain,
That soldier, statesman, navigator, friend,
Who had combined the brain of Richelieu
With the red blood of Cartier and Magellan.⁵⁷

53 E.J. Pratt, "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.39.

54 Ibid., "Dunkirk", p.3.

55 Ibid., "Dunkirk", p.3.

56 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.118.

57 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.43.

The young French priest after a first and almost discouraging term in Canada, in contest with the Indians, returned to Paris and Rouen for spiritual and physical renewal. There temptations aplenty would claim that more glory and a more assured victory could be won under the standard of an earthly monarch, and yet Christ the King does not lost His ardent volunteer:

Nor did the clamour of the Thirty Years,
The battle cries of La Rochelle and Fribourg,
Blow out the flame.⁵⁸

Even in our own day the ordinary daily duties well done contribute to history the signet of glory that has not been surpassed in any former time:

For there had come through radiogram and wire
As high romance as any since the days
When Grecian sails and triremes of Tyre
Hailed Carthaginian ships upon the bays
Of the AEgean.⁵⁹

Other historical images may be found in the poetry embodying such diverse characters as: Wolsey, Napoleon, Nelson, as well as Sir Isaac Newton, Euclid, Benjamin Franklin, and Carlyle. These are far from mere references but, for the most part, they are found in the penetrating and satirical contexts that reflect mirthful indulgence with the serious endeavor as the undercurrent; they are, therefore, accorded only a passing mention in this study of imagery lest a more detailed inclusion of them might denote a propensity to overstress or to exaggerate.

⁵⁸ E.J. Pratt, "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.44.

⁵⁹ Ibid. "The Roosevelt and the Antinoo", p.163.

When the poet deals with imagery from the Church Fathers and the missionaries of historical note the analogies cannot be mistaken. That "the winds of God" of the Brebeuf poem might be the more surely heard, the reader is told that the challenge rang:

Out of Numedia by way of Rome,
The architect of palaces, unbuilt
Of hand, again was busy with his plans⁶⁰

Brebeuf, too, would in St. Augustine style "re-shape for the world his City of God",⁶¹ in another image the forest trails of Canada become the shores of Galilee and along the sands another Christ will tread:

Out of the Netherlands was heard the call
Of Kempis through the Imitatio,
To leave the dusty marts and city streets
And stray along the shores of Galilee.⁶²

The call for volunteers becomes a flame: "The flame had spread across the Pyrenees."⁶³ This flame imagery has been used by many writers to mirror the love of God or the ardor of recruits in a battle of either spiritual or international importance. In the Pratt poetry the call to a life of prayer is:

The visions of Theresa burning through
The adorations of the Carmelites.^{63a}

⁶⁰ E.J. Pratt, "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.37.

⁶¹ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.36.

⁶² Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.37.

⁶³ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.37.

^{63a} Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.37.

And again:

The very clouds at night being cruciform
To John of the Cross--chancel, transept, and aisle,
Blazing with light and holy oracle.⁶⁴

In another image the quest for souls is an ocean compass
indicating the port of Heaven:

Xavier had risen from his knees to drive
His dreams full-sail under an ocean compass.⁶⁵

And because the poem is a tribute to the valiant labours of
the Jesuit priests in Canada, the imagery of that great army
is vivid as it tells of the leader who marches from Pampeluna,
to Manresa, to Montserrat, and thence to encircle the
globe:

Loyola, soldier-priest, staggering with wounds
At Pampeluna, guided by a voice,
Had travelled to Montserrat Abbey
To leave his sword and dagger on an altar
That he might lead the Company of Jesus.⁶⁶

Other isolated images may be found of "bugles from the Roman
Catacombs"⁶⁷ and "the summons from the plague-infested
towns" and also "the foundlings and the galley slaves become
the charges of Vincent of Paul", the "call gave deeper
tongue to the Magnificat". These images and many others
cause the "clarion calling through the notes of the Ignatian
preludes".⁶⁸ to become more distinctly heard and more
promptly answered.

64 E.J. Pratt, "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.37.

65 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.36.

66 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.37.

67 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.37.

68 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.37.

THE INTELLECTIVE ELEMENT

264

The Dignity of Man

To view Pratt's poetry in its entirety is to come to the realization that above all his imagery expresses and proves the dignity of man. Power which has been divorced from the Omnipotent Will of God and the free will of man cannot be trusted. Pratt in his poetic images acknowledges his faith in a just and merciful God; and faith in men who exemplify in character and in code, courage and love and freedom. Upon this point one critic has said: "A passion for spiritual freedom combined with social justice is the core of his religion, in keeping with his upbringing and his life."⁶⁹ In the physical universe Pratt sees seeds of human good and evil but he does not at any time recklessly wish to reshape nature in order to enforce moral ideas. To him the world is meaningless without man, who should 'sanctify' his habitat. Yet man is not quite independent of nature, he must be guided by a reliable knowledge of nature's laws. These thoughts are brought out in the poetic imagery of Pratt. In an effort to illustrate this rather generalized conclusion this section of the essay will be devoted to the study of those images that portray: reason, intellect, will, and virtue.

In primitive times, before the man-made gadgets of our modern life intervened, man trusted in his native powers

⁶⁹ Carl F. Klinck, op.cit., p.15.

and found them more reliable than many of the machines and sextants of to-day. The latter often by efficiency serve and at the same time bruise for they are matter minus mind.

Over and over in the poems, especially in the sea poems, the poet pays tribute to intuition or the human reasoning: while the Roosevelt "steamed into the night" in pursuit of the ship in distress, every outward help was withdrawn:

Not a sextant reading off a star;
No radio now with subtle fingering.
Untied the snarl of the freighter's wayward course.
Nothing but the log and the dead reckoning,⁷⁰

Nothing but the ship-instruments which stated the "force of wind, the direction and the tidal stress" nothing but these, and "the wheel's luck to trail her" but then the poet recalls that these alone, though very necessary would be meaningless.

The master mariner has far more:

Unless there might be added to the sum
Of them, an unexplored residuum--
The bone-and-marrow judgment of a sailor.⁷¹

The same thought of man's confidence in his God-given powers is found again in another poem. Man did not have to wait

-----till miracles of science
Unstopped the naked ears for supersonics,
Or lifted catatacts from infinite vision
To make night and its darkness visible.⁷²

In earlier times man trusted on sight and hearing and on the

⁷⁰ E.J. Pratt, "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.144.

⁷¹ Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.145.

⁷² Ibid., "Behind the Log", p.1.

THE INTELLECTIVE ELEMENT

266

echoes of the sirens that ships blew when nearing land, and Pratt shows his respect for these primitive methods which may yet stand us in good stead:

And when the winds deafened their ears, or cloud
And rain blinded their eyes, they were shoved back
Upon their mother-wit which either had
To find exits to the runs and round
The Capes, or pile their ships upon the reefs.⁷³

And even to-day true seamen are of that same lineage; they, too, can "make shift" and what is lacking in mechanics is supplied by "common sense":

They are still calling to the rocks;
They get their answer in the same hard terms;
They call to steel gliding beneath the sea.⁷⁴

The call goes forth just as insistently and behind the call to-day, just as behind the call in olden days is the mind of man.

But though the radio bursts and vacuum tubes
And electronic beams were miracles
Of yesterday, dismissing cloud and rain
And darkness as illusions of the sense,
Yet always there
To watch the colors.....to hear the echoes,
To feel the pain,
Are eyes and ears and nerves!
Always remains the guess within the judgment--
To jump the fire perfection of the physics,
And smell mortality behind the log.⁷⁵

Lines such as these justify the title of this section; imagery such as this pays tribute to the supremacy of human effort

⁷³ E.J. Pratt, "Behind the Log", p.3.

⁷⁴ Ibid., "Behind the Log", p.4.

⁷⁵ Ibid., "Behind the Log", p.2.

and human will. The asdic was an instrument "attested by the highest signatures of science"⁷⁶ but behind the asdic must have been the man who planned it ---- the man whose God-given intellect would serve him even if science should fail:

His hearing was as vital to the ship--
His ear was as a prism to the light,
Unravelling meanings from a skein of tone.⁷⁷

There are times when in imagery Pratt shows his revulsion from a system that would identify man with the machine:

The men whose surnames blotted by their jobs
Into a scrawl of anonymity,⁷⁸

Or "men who had become incorporate with the cogs".⁷⁹ A modern critic of Pratt's poetry has noted that at times the poet seems anxious to make the machines with their highly geared perfection reflect the artistry of him who planned it:

Yet in no poem does the poet more truly show his distrust of power than in "The 6000" and in "The Man and the Machine." "The 6000" presents a man-made "cachalot" a mechanical bull, a locomotive, symbolic of machinery's great usefulness or of its destructive power, only one step removed from the tank or the submarine; the creature is deliberately numbered, not named, by one who delights in proper names. Nor does the mechanized man of "The Man and the Machine" receive a name.⁸⁰

Man cannot be identified with a machine or with any given

⁷⁶ E.J. Pratt, "Behind the Log", p.20.

⁷⁷ Ibid., "Behind the Log", p.20.

⁷⁸ Ibid., "Behind the Log", p.39.

⁷⁹ Ibid., "Behind the Log", p.39.

⁸⁰ Carl F. Klinck, p.30. op.cit.,

work, and yet to illustrate the marvellous advances in scientific and electrical apparatus we find:

The man whose hands were on the wheel
 Could trace his kinship through her steel,
 Between his body warped and bent
 In every bone and ligament,
 And this "eight-cylinder" stream-lined
 The finest model yet designed.⁸¹

But there is no inconsistency in the poet's thinking, this is "The Man and the Machine" and the satire on commercialization is not lost on the thoughtful reader. The same type of imagery is found in "The Truant". When the god of power, the great Panjandrum, tried to classify man, and to discover by the tests of his servile chemists the basic constituent of the genus homo, he was informed that no analysis was possible: "the stuff is not amenable to fire":⁸²

There still remains that same precipitate
 Which has the quality to resist
 Our oldest and most trusted calalyst.⁸³

The intellect of man, his free will, and reason can never be liquidated by alien forces and in imagery such as this the poet shows his horror of a system that would make man the property of the state. Power, devoid of justice and mercy, is shown in the military imagery of a weapon, a mechanical thing that can neither love nor hate:

⁸¹ E.J. Pratt, "The Man and the Machine", p.224.

⁸² Ibid., "The Truant", p.309.

⁸³ Ibid., "The Truant", p.310.

We grant you speed,
 We grant you power,
 And fire that ends in ash;
 But we concede
 To you no pain, no joy, nor love, nor hate,
 No final tableau of desire,
 No causes won or lost,
 No free adventure at the outposts,
 Only the degradation of your energy.⁸⁴

Sometimes the poet uses an architectural image to portray the reason or judgment. In this case the 'reason of the enemy' is depicted as a clean swept hall or a bright corridor, indicating institutionalism and an absence of sympathy:

Inside the brain of the planner,
 No tolerance befogged the reason--
 The reason with its clean swept halls--
 Its brilliant corridors,
 Where no recesses with their healing dusk
 Offered asylum for a fugitive.⁸⁵

In the Dunkirk poem the reason of the enemy is outlined against confusion: "It was set to a pattern of chaos."⁸⁶ And in "Behind the Log" there is a similar image, but this time the allied powers contest against the chaos:

Upon the Skeena's Bridge the judgment fought
 With chaos. Blindness, deafness visited the brain
 Through a wild paradox of sight
 And sound, the asdic echoes would not fall
 Within their ribbon-tidy categories.⁸⁷

In imagery Pratt tells that time itself makes obeisance to

⁸⁴ E.J. Pratt, "The Truant", p.313.

⁸⁵ Ibid., "Dunkirk", p.2.

⁸⁶ Ibid., "Dunkirk", p.1.

⁸⁷ Ibid., "Behind the Log", p.40.

THE INTELLECTIVE ELEMENT

270

the judgment of man: "A score of doubtful moments"⁸⁸ and also, "Time, again, awaited Fried's decision."⁸⁹

Man's physical features registers the struggle and the contest of the reason and the will:

To pour oil on the sea to assuage the fury,
To make a high-decked vessel ride steady,
To maintain sufficient weather gage,
To avoid the crisis of a tossing wave,
To crawl within a narrow margin,
To run a race for a crew's life
To outstare Death to his salt countenance,
Made up the grim agenda on his face.⁹⁰

The Master Mariner who doubted the mercy of God also "bore the scars" of his conflict:

His face was grained with rebel questionings.⁹¹

Yet the mother was so sure. Confidence and trust were the sacred tracteries of age:

There was no trace
Of doubt or consternation on her face,
Only a calm reliance.⁹²

The immature judgment of childhood is puzzled -- he cannot think things out: "He could not in a rational way, be fully made to understand that the mending of a lifeless body, lay beyond the surgery of his father's hand."⁹³

Pratt's imagery is never more vivid than when he exalts the waves, and winds and crags of his homeland. For

⁸⁸ E.J. Pratt, "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.144.

⁸⁹ Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.146.

⁹⁰ Ibid.,

⁹¹ Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.214.

⁹² Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.215.

⁹³ Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.214.

him the winds of Newfoundland "hold partnership with life -- are resonant with the hope of spring."⁹⁴ The crags are cautious sentinels wary of the furtive action of the sea. They have been entrusted with a sacred pledge to guard the nation:

Here the crags
Meet the winds and the tides,
With the mind that reads assault
In the crouch, and leap, and quick stealth,
Stiffening the muscles of the waves.
They keep watch
On the thresholds, altars and fires of home.⁹⁵

The links of the great bond of friendship between the man and his aged dog is shown when the poet implies that the dog shares human sorrow when failure meets his efforts at rescue work:

And there were other days of bitterness
Whose salt was like the sea, but where no less
Your royal kinship with our heart was shown--
The failures where the will was strong to save.⁹⁶

The true nobility of man, his intellectual greatness, and the triumph of his reason is in evidence when, in spite of the ills of life, in spite of the tumult of a mechanistic power that threatens with "midnight raid", man can still seek light in the morning skies and quench his thirst in "a Galilean valley":

⁹⁴ E.J. Pratt, "Newfoundland", pp.165-166.

⁹⁵ Ibid., "Newfoundland", p.166.

⁹⁶ Ibid., "A Reverie on A Dog", p.211.

We taught our souls to rally
 To mountain horns and the seas rockets;
 We have learned to clench our fists,
 And raise our lightless sockets
 To morning skies, after the midnight raids;
 Yet cocked our ears to bugles on the barricades,
 And in cathedral rubble found a way to quench
 A dying thirst within a Galilean Valley.⁹⁷

When the temptation to seek a life of more comfort and less danger came to the young neophyte in the College of Rennes then "in the Summa of Aquinas, Faith laid hold on God's existence, when the last link of the reason slipped"⁹⁸ and Loyola's command prevented any betrayal. In this case the confused human will know its weakness and depends upon the "Will and the Cause". But there are some other cases when man must depend upon the perfection of the mechanical devices that science has offered and these far from usurping the right of man, merely reflect the knowledge of the artist. When the Roosevelt is so storm-tossed that man unaided cannot chart his course then implicit reliance can be placed in the compass:

Underneath the hairline on the face
 Of the dummy compass card that kept its pace
 With every move, faithful to every trial,
 And like a dogma that might take denial
 From neither sense nor reason, pointed There.⁹⁹

In this same poem there is another image of supreme reliance on the mechanics of the ship:

⁹⁷ E.J. Pratt, "The Truant", p.314.

⁹⁸ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.44.

⁹⁹ Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.141.

THE INTELLECTIVE ELEMENT

273

All felt within their blood they could depend
 On nothing but an elemental trust,
 In bulkheads; in the physics of a dark
 Equation.¹⁰⁰

On the other hand, let it be noted, that whenever it is a question of "might over right" the will of man is always the supreme arbitrator:

The proof, that slays the reason, has no power
 To stem your will, corrode your soul.¹⁰¹

In another poem the author departs from customary exaltation of reason and gives the reader the image of reason as a poison known only to man, here is the degradation of the intellect by applying it to ignoble ends. The words are spoken of the pagan Indians who are less culpable than ignorant, but it might with equal justice be spoken of our concentration-camp-era:

A human art was torture,
 When Reason crept into the veins,
 Mixed tar with blood,
 And brewed its own intoxicant.¹⁰²

And again we have a similar image, this time reason is the spark to light the fire of hatred:

Within a strident word a smart,
 And held within the smart a blow,
 And central to the blow a heart,
 Smouldering up against a foe.¹⁰³

100 E.J. Pratt, "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.144.

101 Ibid., "The Mystic", p.28.

102 Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.55.

103 Ibid., "The Puzzle Picture", in Many Moods, p.20.

THE INTELLECTIVE ELEMENT

274

There are several images of memory, as a small vein, pouring its lifeblood into the "greater arteries of thought":

But winding into the greater artery
Of thought,
That bore upon the coming Passion
Were little tributaries of wayward wish
And reminiscence. Paris with its vespers
Was folded in the mind of Lalement.¹⁰⁴

And again we have a similar image, in the silence of dusk memory becomes more active:

With the day's bugles silent,
When the will that feeds the tumult of our natures,
Rests along the broken arteries of its quests.¹⁰⁵

In yet other imagery Pratt would imply that with reason we have vitality and reality; but without reason there are but phantoms:

The slow unreasoned alternation of the sleet
With hurrying phantoms of the ice and snow.¹⁰⁶

In the struggles of the world of affairs, the work-a-day world, it is never mere calculations that achieve success. It is the deed that resolution forges as a result of intelligent planning:

The hour called for arguments more rife
With gambler's sacrificial bids for life,
The final manner native to his breed
Of men forging decision into deed.¹⁰⁷

Although man may err in judgment and his aim fall far short

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.90.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., "Brebeuf and His Brethren", p.97.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.155.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.156.

of his goal, still "he who has dared has done...whether he lost or won." "Not failure but low aim is crime" is Pratt philosophy and this he outlines very effectively in the poems that end in a note of defeat in "The Titanic"; in "Brebeuf and His Brethren" and in a score of other poems. John Sutherland describes this philosophic attitude thus:

It consents to evil outwardly because inwardly it knows that evil has been permanently overcome--Pratt accepts destruction as a form of sacrifice--he knows that it has been overcome by the sacrifice of Christ.¹⁰⁸

This is the opinion of the man who has found a Christian interpretation in the poetry of Pratt. The poet's own explanation of this same note of defeat is given to the reader in a poem which has one thematic image of infinite Light:

Although with heart as keen and speed as swift
As ancient courier had or argonaut,
You followed every quest that light had caught
Within its web; yet day with niggard thrift
Withdrew its crimsons, causing greys to sift
Like ashes, through your hands, till what you thought
Brave banners in the west were phantoms wrought
Merely of space and its amorphous drift.
Still let the heart take counsel of the feet,
Whose loyal sinews bore you up to greet
The night: for though the frugal game denies
The goal--one flaming pennant from the sun--
It won't refuse, after your baffled run,
The long cool wash of stars upon your eyes.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ John Sutherland, op.cit., p.17.

¹⁰⁹ E.J. Pratt, "The Lost Cause", in Many Moods, p.26.

THE INTELLECTIVE ELEMENT

276

The Poet and The Sea

The theme of the sea has always been a favourite one with poets as well as with prose writers. One of the most obvious literary influences upon writers is the Bible, and on the very first page of the Book of Genesis we read:

And the earth was without form and void;
 And the darkness was upon the face of the deep;
 -----And he gathered the waters unto one place:
 And the gathering together of the waters called He seas.
 Genesis ch.1, verse 2.

The ancient Greeks believed that the beginning of everything was the issuing of Eros from the egg of Night which floated upon Chaos. Anglo-Saxon literature reflects a seagoing people; repeatedly the mind's eye is invited to travel over "the wide water, the whale's way". The hero was frequently a "far-come seafarer" who had travelled "as far as the sea's verge that clips the high cliffs where the winds make their home." The foundations of our literature supply such images, but we need not go so far back.

Revolutionary changes in sensibilities and in style are rare--and the handling of the symbols of the sea and the storms by Shakespeare provides us with a bridge between what may be called the Classic and the Romantic attitude.
 110

Joseph Conrad in our own century calls up varied scenes that find a centre in the image of the sea, but to

110 W.H. Auden, The Enchafed Flood, or The Romantic Iconography of the Sea, London, Faber and Faber, 1944, pp.22-23.

Conrad it is a sea of challenge--a wave-road whereupon is displayed man's reactions to opportunity and to danger.

A very recent analysis of sea imagery which concerns itself with imaginative meanings is W.H. Auden's sketchy but provocative essay entitled The Enchafêd Flood.

Since Pratt has so frequently been termed "a poet of the sea" it may be enlightening to look at his sea imagery with the parallel conceptions of Conrad and Auden in mind. Let it be noted, however, that no actual comparison is intended --the odds are too unequal. Imagery of poetry cannot be measured with imagery of prose although both may possess grandeur and profundity as well as complexity.

Auden points out that the traditional poetic use of the sea was to represent a primitive and a powerful freedom from sophistication and from social structures--the sea indicated an estrangement from society and the unfriendliness of man; "the ship of state" was a metaphor employed when society was in danger. In contrast to these images Auden claims that the distinctive notes in the Romantic attitude are: 1) To leave the land and the city is the desire of every man of sensibility and honour. 2) The sea is the real situation and the voyage is the true condition of man. 3) The sea is where the decisive events, the moments of eternal choice, of temptation, and fall, and redemption occur. The shore life is always trivial. 4) An abiding destination is

unknown even if it may exist: a lasting relationship is not possible nor even to be desired. There is not too much difference between the theory of Auden and the practice of Conrad; for both, shore life is trivial; both consider the sea as the place of decisive events and moments of eternal choice; and for both the entire attention of the reader is to be focalized on the hero, the man who plays the decisive role, on him who makes the eternal choice. Now let us look at the sea imagery of Pratt.

We have seen thus far that Pratt's images are not used decoratively; they are used functionally. However, it must be acknowledged that in the poet's earlier attempts figurative imagery may be found; that this later almost entirely disappears is a proof of poetic development, a breaking away from the shackles of immaturity.

In one of his very first poems Pratt imparts to the sea the personification of the cycles of man's daily life:

At dawn--
 A trumpeter preluding a day's pageant.
 At noon--
 A dancer weaving new measures round the
 Furrows of ships with white sails.
 Later--
 A courier with sealed tidings hastening toward the shore.
 At sunset--
 A dyer steeping colours in a bay.
 Again--
 A sculptor teasing faces out of the moonlit
 Foam upon the reef,
 Or carving bric-a-brac upon a beach,
 Or fashioning with age-toiled hands,
 A grotto out of limestone.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ E. J. Pratt, "Sea Variations", in Canadian Poets,
 editor: Garvin, p. 472.

Such imagery is vivid and delightful, yet it is not Pratt as we now know him, any half a dozen poets of the Romantic era might have written the above lines, for they have no distinctive Pratt hall-marks. As his poetic vision matures, Pratt's sea imagery becomes more realistic; it becomes his own--not always by the same technique, but always with the same goal in view. In imagery the sea may at one time be a dangerous highway:

When every mile along the ocean highway
Was calling for protection, and in calling,
Demanded life and life's expenditure.¹¹²

The ships of Pratt are not the "ships of State" of Auden, which needed to be protected; they are the mastiffs that "guard" and "protect". Animal imagery very frequently portrays the ship, and sometimes even the waves and also the sea:

Of sleeker, faster breed,
The Skeena ranged a far periphery
At thirty knots, now out of sight and now
Closing the convoy as her nose tried out
The dubious scents in narrowing eclipses.
The slower guards kept closer to their broods,
Pushing their way within the column lanes,
Emerged to pace the port and starboard flanks
Or nuzzled with a deep strategic caution
The hulls of those whose tardy engine beats
Brought down the knots of faster ships, and made
The gravest risk and worry for the fleet.¹¹³

Animal imagery is found again in:

¹¹²E.J. Pratt, "Behind the Log", p.16.

¹¹³Ibid., "Behind the Log", p.18.

THE INTELLECTIVE ELEMENT

280

The double-line of lifeboats lay like rows
Of mastodons asleep in polar snows.114

The Antinoe defeated by the storm is not a fighting animal
but a lone and frightened bird:

The freighter like a lone
Sea-mallard with a broken wing was seen.115

Like an animal "the Roosevelt strayed beyond the vernier" and
fled "the freighter's wayward course" and until "the scent
was cold by now" and as a consequence:

The baffled liner like a water-dog
Would dip her nose to the sea and then up-rear
Her head, with black hawse nostrils keen to flair
A flying quarry.116

In animal imagery the waves become militantly active:

Like creatures of a fabled past
From their deep hidings in unlighted caves,
The long processions of great-bellied waves
Cast forth their monstrous births
Which with grey fang....coiled and sprang
For the boat, impatient of its slow descent
Into their own inviolate element.117

The life-boat reached the waves and found "a test beyond her
training":

Like a colt untried
She bucked control and though she carried well
The lop of shorter waves, she plunged and shied
The moment that she reached the top of swell.118

In animal imagery the Roosevelt kept up the struggle:

114 E.J. Pratt, "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.138.

115 Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.143.

116 Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.146.

117 Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.148.

118 Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.148.

Heaving, subsiding with her lathered flank,
 Like a bison smitten from the loin to shank,
 Surrendering to the wolves about her throat.119

The Antinoe about to sink is a wounded animal:

When at certain moments, the ship tried
 For balance, lifting up a wounded side
 To ease a wave that struck amidships.120

The same wounded-animal imagery is found in "The Titanic" in
 "As leaning on her side to ease a pain."121

For the ships, the least of all the hazards were
 winds and waves:

For these the ships were built
 The keels had learned the way to bite
 Into their troughs:
 Such was their native element.122

Animal imagery accedes to a more personal note:

When ships announced their wounds by rockets;
 Wrote their own obituaries in flame
 That soared two hundred feet and stabbed
 The Arctic night,
 Like some neurotic and untimely sunrise.123

And further on in the same poem we find:

Exploding tankers turned the sky to canvas,
 Soaked it in orange fire, kindled the sea,
 Then carpeted their graves with wreaths of soot.124

Again the ships are the pawns of a sea chess board:

119 E.J. Pratt, "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.148.

120 Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.159.

121 Ibid., "The Titanic", p.115.

122 Ibid., "Behind the Log", p.20.

123 Ibid., "Behind the Log", p.28.

124 Ibid., "Behind the Log", p.28.

In what proportions did the elements
 Combine to move these individual pawns
 Of power, in their massed flesh-and-nerve formation
 Across a board?¹²⁵

Pratt delights in the power of the waves but he is now, and has been from his childhood keenly conscious of their cruelty and deception:

There was mockery within the sea's caress
 The way a wave would clamour up the bow,
 Scout around the shadows of the foc's'le,
 Tattoo the face of the Bridge,
 And lazily slither along the deck,
 And then hiss through the hawse-pipes
 As the corvette dipped her nose,
 To the slow anaesthetic of the swell.¹²⁶

In imagery the treachery of a fawning animal is:

Mockery it was on face, and lips, and fingers,
 For, after her reconnaissance, the sea
 As urging death with a forensic fury,
 Would shed her velvet syllables, return
 With loaded fists to thunder at the gun-shields.¹²⁷

Not less effective is the imagery when Pratt portrays the heroism of the persons on the sea. Indeed, it is so frequently stressed that the reader is almost forced to come to the conclusion that the entire drama of the sea and the fighting or the rescuing is but a backdrop upon which to silhouette the courage of men, or that the sea is an environment that begets bravery:

¹²⁵ E.J. Pratt, "Behind the Log", p.30.

¹²⁶ Ibid., "Behind the Log", p.33.

¹²⁷ Ibid., "Behind the Log", p.33.

Captain Tose had worn his buttons well,
 His bread had now returned upon the waters,
 For while master of another vessel, he
 Rescued a Philadelphian bark in seas
 And winds only less full of death than these.¹²⁸

The Master mariner, proves that honour is the code of seamen,
 and then rebelliously questions: "Do you bury your dead in
 the national folds?/ At sea, life like wine is spilled at
 a word to retrieve/ The ravage of the gales!¹²⁹The survivors
 from a burning ship would carry for life "their facial grafts"
 yet they could tell:

Of the scramble from the boiler rooms
 Only to find their exit was the sea,
 And there to find the only exit
 From its cauldrom surface
 Was its drowning depths.¹³⁰

Other images could be given but the writer believes that
 these are sufficient in number and strength and vividness to
 prove that for Pratt the sea is a place of intense activity,
 a place of strife and contest. In Conrad youth puzzles over
 and solves some psychological problem. In Auden the psycho-
 logical intensity urges escape and the sea is a ready means
 of estrangement, of giving man power to live face to face
 with his own inner consciousness, of really knowing himself.
 In Pratt the sea plays a far different role. The sea is
 man's heritage.

¹²⁸ E.J. Pratt, "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.160.

¹²⁹ Ibid., "The Iron Door", p.215.

¹³⁰ Ibid., "Behind the Log", p.44.

It is still a scene of combat, but it is a cosmic sea; a sea that encircles the world and holds humanity's interests and humanity's safety. The struggle is always evident as it was in nineteenth century literature but the boundaries have widened, the horizons are at a greater distance, the strife is national or international and the hero is ennobled by self-forgetfulness just as much as by psychological solutions. In Conrad the reader's intense interest in the problem and in him who solves it is so great that other considerations are blurred. In Auden, adventure looms large, shore life becomes trivial. In Pratt the hero is heroic by highlighting the good of all mankind even when this means an obliteration of his own virtues which are glimpsed but in reflection.

In Pratt's imagery there is no room for subjectivism. Gigantic victories are won and overwhelming defeats are met, yet always the climax is in muted tones:

131

Men were brought below where ocean miracles were wrought.
And having rescued all lives from a floundering ship, the
Roosevelt:

132

Swung out the Sound with her day's work well done.
The stark tragedy of a life-and-death crisis pales in the
shadow of the salvation necessity:

131 E.J. Pratt, "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.160.

132 Ibid., "The Roosevelt and the Antinoe", p.162.

THE INTELLECTIVE ELEMENT

285

Commerce was ever in the barter.

Blood mixed with sea-foam was the cost
Of plasma...to revein the vines for fresher fruits
In a new harvest on a hoped tomorrow.¹³³

And thus it is with all the other poems. The struggle is
unto death; the problem is almost beyond the solving:

Unless the grain of wheat die,
Itself remaineth alone.¹³⁴

On the vast and boundless ocean there is no room for self-
glorification.

¹³³ E.J. Pratt, "Behind the Log", p.46.

¹³⁴ St. John, Chapter xii, verse 32.

CONCLUSION

We have come to the end of the thesis. Its purpose was not to rank the poetry of Edwin John Pratt as supreme because of its vivid imagery; nor to claim that the poet constructed any obscure symbolism, which evokes a coherent psychological pattern for which all the images are relevant. No claim is made that the poet is preacher or prophet. Pratt has no "message" to announce. His experiences do not tempt him to philosophy or to prose formulation.

The purpose of the thesis was to glean from the various definitions of imagery that may be picked up from almost any text of literary criticism a simple workable definition that would suit this essay; and then with conscious, sincere, and objective effort, to study the imagery contained in the poetry of Pratt.

No effort has been made to classify all the images, nor even to study all the poems. A representative number of both has been deemed sufficient.

Such a study necessitated a planned approach. Imagery may be studied by several different methods. There is what might be termed the "Spurgeon method", that is, a detailed classification and count. There is also the "chronological method", in which each chapter of research represents a certain volume of the poet's work, or a certain period of his poetic production. There is the study of "fundamental interrelationships" of image, language, and poetry. Still

CONCLUSION

287

another way is the study of the images in their sensuous, emotional, and intellectual elements. All these methods have been used in the study of imagery, at one time or another.

The research herein recorded is almost a combination of what the writer considered to be the best ingredients culled from each of the above methods. No strict demarcation lines limit the scope of investigation. The main divisions of the thesis are those of the sensuous, the emotional, and the intellectual elements. Yet, it cannot be too strongly urged that these divisions do not divide, for the image is one composite whole. The grouping merely outlines the fields of action, and thus prevents a multitude of images from overpowering the worker at any given time. The images classed in each of these sections are considered more or less relevant because they tend to lean more to that aspect of imagery than to either of the other two.

To his images and symbols Pratt has supplied no prose equivalents. Yet, even the casual reader must acknowledge that the imagery is more than a pageant.

It has been found that Pratt has written a poetry that is lavishly imagistic. The images are rarely used for purposes of decoration only, although in his earlier attempts such imagery is found. The imagery becomes stronger, more vivid, and more complex, also more paradoxical as the poetic vision matures. The images are not widely ranging, in

CONCLUSION

288

related contexts one finds similar images, and the thematic trend elucidates as well as carries the thread of the picture. There is no conscious straining on the part of the poet to be "symbolic". Indeed, it is unlikely, even, that he knows why certain images possess for him, a particular potency.

The writer of the thesis believes that the imagery is vivid, and revealing, and that the poet is ingenuous and free from self-consciousness and is imaginatively uncensored.

Pratt's poetry cannot be termed "derivative". It is vigorously original; and yet, because of the precision and the accuracy of mythological, historical, scientific and ethical allusions the sincere claim may be made that it is well founded "in the tradition".

As the study progressed the weakness as well as the strength of the imagery was revealed: picture seems to crowd upon picture in the poet's imagination, with such insistence that too little heed is paid to the metaphorical mode of intelligation which critics claim to be the medium through which correspondences between the poetic world and the real world are made known to the reader. Pratt's images are true, the analogies are always there, but they are too often submerged. Another weakness which the poem seems unable to avoid is a lack of conciseness. This is the reason that in some cases an unduly long passage had to be quoted in order to present a just illustration.

CONCLUSION

289

The time in which a man lives is never very generous to him. It would seem that perspective is necessary for poetic evaluation. Imagery is an unconscious revelation of the poet--a documentation of his life. Although no attempt has been made to classify tastes or habits or any physical endowments to which the images may bear witness, yet the writer believes that they do portray the poet's mode of thought.

As has been stated this poet does not preach or teach, yet the images are controlled by the philosophy of the author. His great attention to accuracy of detail proclaims his supreme desire to communicate truth, and being an artist he must convey it in the light of his own convictions and beliefs.

If this interpretation be deemed a reading-in of meanings not already in the poems, the writer's only defense must be that throughout the study there has been a sincere effort to investigate thoroughly and to report objectively.

The meaning of the poem is primarily the poet's; and it is the student's primary occupation (though not necessarily his initial intention) to discover what the poet means; yet, in spite of the utmost care to be unprejudiced we cannot evacuate our own minds, nor rid the race-mind of the accumulations of the years. Meaning is, and meanings accrue. This thesis is the effort of a critical reader to effect a harmonization between the poet and the poem by way of the imagery.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Auden, W.H., The Enchafed Flood, The Romantic Iconography of the Sea, London: Faber and Faber, 1950, p.126.

In three provocative essays Auden deals with the symbolic meanings that pertain to the Romantic era. Chapter I. is devoted to the sea and symbolism. This was used for parallel purposes in the last chapter of the thesis.

Ayre, Robert, "Canadian Writers of To-day", article in Canadian Forum, vol. xii, April 1932, pp.255-257.

The main intent of the article seems to be to prove the originality of Pratt's poems and to do so the author mentions the imagery as a contributing factor.

Babbitt, Irving, Rousseau and Romanticism, New York: Meridian Books, 1955, p.323.

The first chapter of this book, "The Terms Classic and Romantic", was very useful in the preparation of the thesis especially for the chapter on definitions.

Benson, N.A. "Brebeuf and His Brethren", review in Canadian Poetry Magazine, Toronto, vol. 5, No.1, September 1940.

Although the review is concerned chiefly with the heroic strength, the author also mentions the vivid images.

Birney, Earle, "A Distinguished Canadian Poem" article in Canadian Forum, vol. xv. December 1941, p.278.

In this review of "Dunkirk" the author speaks of the unique originality of the imagery.

_____, "Canadian Poem of the Year" article in Canadian Forum, Toronto, vol.xx. September 1940, p.270.

The author notes the accuracy of detail in the Brebeuf poem. In speaking of its narrative strength he also pays tribute to the vivid imagery.

Blackmur, R.P., Form and Value in Modern Poetry, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957, pp.388.

This is a series of seventeen essays on the poetry of modern authors. Chapter vi. was important for this thesis. In it the author attempts to find and interpret Eliot's symbols in the poems from "Ash Wednesday" to "Murder in the Cathedral" and to note the images of good and evil.

Brower, Reuben Arthur, Fields of Light, New York: Oxford University Press, 1951, xii-215 pp.

The author's thesis: "an image need not be a metaphor" was brought in to support statements in the chapter on definitions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

291

Brown, E.K., On Canadian Poetry, Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1943, vii-169 pp.

The book deals with the status of Canadian poetry in general. In section three twenty-two pages are devoted to the poems of Pratt. Narrative and epic strength receive extra attention but the author also subscribes to the vivid imagery and the claims of ironic strength that other critics have noted.

_____, "Letters in Canada" article in University of Toronto Quarterly, 1937, pp.341-345.

This is a review of "The Fable of the Goats", the author explains that Pratt in allegory of wild creatures exemplifies human traits, ambition, pugnacity, as well as peace and conciliation. This is perhaps the first time that Pratt's bounding temperament which formerly captivated his imagination is subdued to the purest form of Christian temper.

_____, "Letters in Canada", article in University of Toronto Quarterly, 1940, pp.285-287.

In a review of "Brebeuf and His Brethren" Professor Brown states that the poem is notable for its imagery. He then singles out three or four images that he considers supreme.

_____, "Letters in Canada", article in University of Toronto Quarterly, 1941, pp.289-291.

In a review of "Behind the Log" the author states that the sea becomes a deus ex machina and that fog and fleet combine to give the poet the impetus of vivid imagery.

_____, "Letters in Canada", article in University of Toronto Quarterly, 1943, pp.341-345.

This review acknowledges that there is a marked development in the imagery from the earlier attempts of Pratt to his more mature creations. It states "What is happening to his style is analogous to what happened to Yeats's."

_____, "Letters in Canada" articles in all University of Toronto Quarterlies, between the years 1937-1949.

These were annual contributions, and although only a few of them are singled out above for special mention, in almost each publication there was mention of the strength and vividness of Pratt's imagery.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

292

Brown, Stephen, J., The World of Imagery, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1927, 352 pp.

This study was found to be one of the most useful when the attempt was made to select a suitable definition. Quotations from this book are found in Chapter II.

Brooks, Cleanth, Modern Poetry and the Tradition, Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 1939, 253 pp. The book deals with the works of Auden, Eliot, MacLeish. The author maintains that poetry and poetic theory were deflected from their traditional line by rationalists and that the so called obscure poetry of our day may bring it back.

_____, The Well Wrought Urn, New York; Reynal and Hitchcock, 1947, 253 pp.

The detailed study of the poems that the author deals with in this book gave suggestions and parallels for methods used in the present study.

Buck, Gertrude, The Metaphor, A Study in the Psychology of Rhetoric, Ann Arbor: Michigan, The Inland Press, 1899, 245 pp.

Although the thesis has not dealt with the psychological trends of the images of Pratt still the handling of the metaphor by Professor Buck was helpful.

Bulfinch, Thomas, The Age of Fable, Philadelphia: David MacKay, 1898, xxiii-501 pp.

A consecutive history of mythology, with contributions from the masters Homer, Virgil, Euripides etc. as well as illustrative uses by Shakespeare, Dryden, Milton, and by more modern writers.

Bush, Douglas, Mythology and the Romantic Tradition, in English Poetry, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931.

Chapter III. of the thesis deals with the use of mythology by Pratt and this study of the same subject in relation to the Romantic Tradition was very useful.

S.H. Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and the Fine Arts, London: Macmillan, 1902, xii-419pp.

Chapter II, of this book "Imitation as an Aesthetic Term" was found to be useful in the preparation of this thesis.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

293

Clark, George Herbert, between the years 1935 and 1948 in Queen's Quarterly, (annual contributions) Professor Clark reviewed:

"Many Moods"; "The Fable of the Goats"; "Brebeuf and His Brethren"; "On Canadian Poetry"; and "Collected Poems" in almost each review pays tribute to the imagery of Pratt.

Clemen, Wolfgang, H., The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery, London: Methuen, 1951, xii-236 pp.

This study of Shakespeare's imagery provided many ideas for the treatment of the more modern imagery in the thesis.

Collins, W.E., The White Savannahs, Toronto: Macmillan, 1936, pp.119-144.

In the chapter "Pleiocene Heroics" the author partly subscribes to the heroic trend in Pratt's work but believes that Pratt's real position is between the older and the new tradition.

Dobree, Bonamy, The Broken Cistern, London: Cohen & Wood, 1954, ix-158 pp.

Chapters V. and VI gave parallels of patriotic imagery that were found useful when "Dunkirk" was studied.

Drew, Elizabeth, Discovering Poetry, New York: Norton, 1933, 224 pp.

In this book pages 145 to 162 deal with imagery. This is the section that was especially helpful for this thesis, as well as the brief annotated bibliography.

Drew, Elizabeth and John L. Sweeney, Directions in Modern Poetry, New York: Norton, 1940, 290 pp.

The authors show great sympathy with ambitious obscurity. The book is written in essay style. The essay "Poetry and Meaning" and also "Poets of Affirmation" were found to be helpful.

Durrell, Lawrence, Key to Modern Poetry, London: Peter Nevill, 1952, xii-207 pp.

A series of ten lectures on the subject of modern criticism of poetry. The chapter which was the most useful for this study was the one entitled "Georgians and Imagists".

BIBLIOGRAPHY

294

Edgar, Pelham, Leading Canadian Poets, Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1948, pp.175-183.

This study devoted to the Pratt poetry mentions but does not deal in any detail with the vivid imagery.

_____, Across My Path, (Edited by Northrop Frye) Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1952, pp.xiv-167.

In the evaluation of the narrative style of Pratt the imagery also is stressed as being a contributing factor.

_____, "Review of Edwin Pratt and His Poetry," in Ottawa Journal, May 23, 1947, p.6.

The author mentions Pratt's relationship with traditional writers, and stresses his originality.

_____, "Literature and Life, A Booklover's Corner" in The Globe, Toronto: February 11, April 29, May 6, 1939.

These essays all acknowledge the imaginative strength of Pratt.

Eliot, T.S., "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in Selected Essays, 1917-1932, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1932, pp.3-11.

Eliot's "Objective Correlative" can be applied to many of the "situations" and "chains of events" in the imagery of Pratt--the imagery of the one poet is not so different though less obscure than the imagery of the other.

Ellis-Fermor, Una, Some Recent Research in Shakespeare's Imagery, London: The Shakespearean Press, 1937.

This book together with the other books on Shakespeare's imagery were of value to the present essay as a guide to method, and sometimes as a help to definitive elements.

Fairchild, Hoxie, N., The Romantic Quest, New York: Columbia University Press, 1931.

The Romantic quest was for a suitable image that would carry the proper symbolism, this book was useful for comparative purposes.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

295

Foss, Martin, Symbol and Metaphor in Human Experience, Princeton: Princeton, University Press, 1949, 204 pp.

This book deals with the interpretation of symbols and their application to philosophy and the arts.

Frye, Northrop, "Levels of Meaning in Literature", in Kenyon Review, xii, Spring 1950, pp.246-262.

Meaning can never be positive--the reader may never be sure that he is not being subjective in his interpretation, but the image gives an insight that is not gleaned in any other way.

_____, "Canadian Letters" in Canadian Forum, September 1940, p.140.

This is a review of Edwin J. Pratt, The Man and His Poetry, the author stresses the originality of the of the poet, and pays tribute to the strength and vividness of his images.

_____, "Letters in Canada", in University of Toronto Quarterly, 1952, p.270.

The author stresses the imaginative value of Pratt's poetry.

Gustafson, Ralph, "Behind the Log", in Canadian Forum, June 1948, p.68.

The author mentions the vivid imagery in this sea poem, but does not evaluate any specific images.

Hamilton, Edith, Mythology, New York, North American Library, 1955, 335 pp.

A popular exposition of classical mythology. This book was useful in the study of the third chapter of the thesis.

Hight, Gilbert, The Classical Tradition, London: Oxford University Press, 1949, 763 pp.

This book has been termed a combination of intellectual practicality with aesthetic and moral idealism. It deals with authors from Homer to Mallarme and with the symbolism of modern poetry.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

296

Hillyer, Robert, "Poetic Sensitivity to Time", in Saturday Review, April 28, 1945, p.11.

This is a review of Collected Poems. The author notes the predominance of the sea as a symbol of time; the immediacy of flashes from the past, the use of superstition, and the angry condemnation of man's inhumanity to man. Although Hillyer does not stress the imagery; it is only by images that the sensitivity to time can be perceived.

Hurlow, W.J., "The Work of Dr. E.J. Pratt, Canada's Masfield and Uncrowned Laureate", in the Evening Citizen, Ottawa, Nov. 15, 1947. p.24.

The article is a review of "Behind the Log". This article proclaims that Pratt is in the tradition of Wordsworth, Burns, and Masfield and the poets of the homely things of life. Pratt makes the work-a-day world realistic and poetic by image and symbol.

Klinck, C.F., and H.W. Wells, Edwin J. Pratt, The Man and His Poetry, Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1947 viii-196pp.

Although the book was written to stress the heroic note and to prove the derivative quality of Pratt's work-- both authors subscribe to Pratt's vivid imaginative power. Direct Quotations from this book may be found throughout the thesis.

Knight, G. Wilson, The Wheel of Fire, London: Methune, 1956, xiii-343 pp.

This is a series of fifteen lectures on the interpretation of imagery of Shakespeare. There is a thirteen page introduction by T.S. Eliot. Both the essays and the Introduction were useful in preparing the thesis. Chapter xii, "Symbolic Personification is an elaboration of the hate-theme, Chapter iv, is a study of Measure for Measure, by the standards of the Gospel. This book was a very useful guide for the writing of the section dealing with love, fear and grace.

Langer, Susanne K., Philosophy in a New Key, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942, 313 pp.

The sub-title of this book is "A Study of Symbolism, of Reason, Rite and Art. In the book Mrs. Langor states that for our age the key to both scientific and humanistic problems is the study of "symbolic Transformation". She carefully analyzes the process where by the human mind operates from art object to artifact.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

297

Lewis, Cecil Day, The Poetic Image, London, Jonathan Cape, 1955, 157 pp.

This was perhaps the main source for the chapter of definitions. The author contends that the moralizing note never disappears from poetry but like the poem's thought assumed a more or less allusive tone and tends to create images.

Lowes, John Livingston, The Road to Xanadu, London: Oxford University Press, 1951, 435 pp.

Professor Lowes studies the ways of the imagination as revealed in the Rime of the Ancient Mariner, he shows how the jumbled recollections of Coleridge became transmuted into pure poetry. It is a study of the moulding of the imagination of the poet.

MacKay, L.A., "The Poetry of E.J. Pratt" article in Canadian Forum, December 1945.

A concise estimate of the literary value of Pratt's work, with a short paragraph devoted to the originality of the images and the accuracy of detail in expression.

Maritain, Jacques, Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry, New York: Meridan Press, 1955, 339 pp.

The chapter on the creative idea warns the reader that the idea is not the concept, and that a work of art is an original not a copy. The entire chapter was useful in this study.

Marsh, Florence, Wordsworth's Imagery, A Study in Poetic Vision, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1952, xi-146.

Imagery is herein studied in connection with idea and language.

Murry, John Middleton, "Metaphor" in John Clare and Other Studies, London: Peter Nevill, 1949, vii-252 pp.

The author explains the metaphorical mode and states that the mastery of imagery does not lie in revealing isolated images but in the total impression produced by a succession of related images.

_____, "Poetry and Prayer" in Things to Come, London: Jonathan Cape, 1928, 256 pp.

This chapter was useful when the writer was working on the emotional element of the image. Professor Murry holds that the mind of the reader orders thought relationships that constitute imagery.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

298

New Testament, Translated from Latin Vulgate, London, Catholic Book Publishers, 1945.

The Pauline references found in the poetry were studied in reference to the originals in this text.

Phelps, Arthur, L., Canadian Writers, Toronto: MacClelland & Stewart, 1951 p.9.

In a very brief chapter the author recognizes the originality of the poet and the development of the vividness of his imagery as the years advanced from his first poems till he wrote "Behind the Log".

Pratt, Edwin John. Chronological list of Pratt's writings. These poems have not all been actually used, but it has been found necessary to make a comparative study of all, the list is therefore herein included for the benefit of the reader.

Newfoundland Verse, Toronto, The Ryerson Press, 1925.

The Witches' Brew, London: Selwyn and Blunt, 1925.

Titans, (including "The Cachalot " and "The Great Feud") Toronto: The Macmillan Company, 1926.

The Iron Door, Toronto: Macmillan, 1927.

The Roosevelt and the Antinoe, Toronto: Macmillan, 1930.

Verses of the Sea, Toronto: Macmillan, 1930.

The Titanic, Toronto: Macmillan, 1935.

The Fable of the Goats, Toronto: Macmillan, 1937.

Brebeuf and His Brethren, Toronto: Macmillan, 1940.

Dunkirk, Toronto: Macmillan, 1941.

Still Life and Other Verses, Toronto: Macmillan, 1943.

Collected Poems, Toronto: Macmillan, 1944.

They are Returning, Toronto: Macmillan, 1945.

Behind the Log, Toronto: Macmillan, 1947.

Towards the Last Spike, Toronto, Macmillan, 1952.

Note: Many of the poems have been published in Collected Poems, whenever it was possible this is the text that was used for the thesis, if one of the other texts was used mention is made of the fact in a footnote.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

299

O'Neill, Joseph E., Imagery in the Poetry of Longfellow, New York: Columbia University Press, 1955, 199 pp.

Imagery is herein studied according to sensuous, emotional and intellectual aspects.

Pottle, Frederick, The Idiom of Poetry, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1941, 139 pp.

This is a series of six lectures in which the author almost reduces the poetic art to sensibility. He seems to separate the expressive power from the intellectual power and even suggests that the latter are inimical of the former.

Richards, I.A., Principles of Literary Criticism, London, Oxford University Press, 1925, 224 pp.

The main thesis is that the proper meaning of a word is a fallacy and that all words change meaning according to the usage and the context. The studies of Richards were used but not as popularly held tenets.

_____, The Philosophy of Rhetoric, London: Oxford University Press, 1936, 119 pp.

This book gives a definition of metaphor and considers the metaphor as the supreme agent by which disperate and hitherto unconnected things are brought together in poetry.

Sandwell, B.K., "The Saga of the Steel Road", in Saturday Review, June 28, 1952, p.26.

The author proclaims that Pratt is an artist of evocative phrase, vivid image and descriptive power.

Schorer, Mark, "Fiction and the Matrix of Analogy" Kenyon Review, xi, Autumn 1949, pp.539-560.

The author states that the submerged image derives power for its analogy from the matrix. This concurs with another study on the recurrent image.

Seward, Barbara, "The Artist and the Rose" article in University of Toronto Quarterly, January 1957, pp.180-190.

This is a study of the rose imagery in A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man, by James Joyce. The article provided suggestions for the study of the rose imagery in the thesis.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

300

Skelton, Robin, The Poetic Pattern, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956, iv-228 pp.
Chapter VI. "The Poetic Image" was used in formulating the definitions in the thesis and there are several quotations from this chapter and also from Chapter II. "The Beginnings of Poetry".

Spofford, Ainsworth, and Charles Gibbon, Editors of The Library of Choice Literature, Vol. iv. Philadelphia, Gebbie, 1881, 383 pp.

The book was helpful in doing the chapter on mythology. It contains a complete account of "The Theonogy of Hesiod". This and Hesiod's "Works and Days" has been studied to note Pratt's borrowings from the ancient poet's style when he pays tribute to the day labourer.

Sutherland, John, "E.J. Pratt, A Major Contemporary Poet", in Northern Review of Writing and the Arts in Canada. February/ March ... April/ May 1952, pp.36-64.

The author pays tribute to Pratt as a poet who consistently uses the symbol of birth; and claims that the images of compassion form a link between the poet's sympathy with nature and his early ethical training.

_____, The Poetry of E.J. Pratt, A New Interpretation, Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1956, 109 pp.

This book deals with the three longest poems of Pratt and seeks out a Christian meaning. It also makes a comparison between the different poems that have a similar theme. During the progress of the thesis several quotations were taken from this text.

Spurgeon, Caroline, Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us, Cambridge, University Press, 1935, pp.ix-408.

This analysis of the plays of Shakespeare has been one of the most useful sources in the writing of the thesis. The same method of classification was used although not the same accuracy of count.

Sullivan, A.M., "Review of Behind the Log", Saturday Review of Literature, May 15, 1948, p.24.

"In recounting the tale of the slow freighters shepherded by the thin-skinned terriers of the North, Pratt demonstrated the vigor of his poetic diction, and the vitality of his imagery."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

301

Tarwick, Buckner, B., World Literature, New York: Barnes & Noble, 1955, vii-280 pp.

This provides a biography, synopsis, and criticism of the great works of literature with copious introductions and cross-references. The book was useful for work at the chapter of the intellectual element.

Tindall, William York, The Literary Symbol, New York, Columbia University Press, 1955, vii-267.

The author gives a study of rose imagery in pages 28 to 43, this was useful in the study of the rose imagery of the poetry of Pratt and quotations are cited in the thesis from this book.

Trilling, Lionel, "The Meaning of the Literary Idea" in The Liberal Imagination, New York: The Viking Press, 1950, pp.281-303.

The author states that the work of art functions as a subject as well as an object with an existence of its own.

Tuve, Rosemond, Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947, 442 pp.

The poets who receive the most attention are Daniel, Donne, Drayton, Herrick, Sydney, and Spenser. Then among the more recent poets Yeats, the intellectual quality of imagery is emphasized and sensuous vividness is not neglected. Miss Tuve makes the poet appear didactic as well as poetic.

_____, Images and Themes, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1957, 161 pp.

Although the book is a study of five of the shorter poems of Milton the writer of the thesis found the author's method of dealing with image themes and thematic cores very helpful in the study of imagery herein contained. The same method was employed with the images in "The Titanic".

Warren, Austin, Richard Crashaw, A Study of Baroque Sensibility, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1957, 258 pp.

The first three chapters deal with the man being studied and are therefore not useful for this essay. But the following chapters contain excellent definitions and useful methods to select images and symbols.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

302

Wellek, Rene and Austin Warren, "Image, Metaphor, Symbol, Myth" in Theory of Literature, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1949, pp.190.

In this section of the book the authors give a poetic manifesto of literary criticism. There are distinctions drawn between literary theory (poetics); evaluation of literature (criticism); techniques of research (scholarships); and the dynamics of literature (literary history).

Wells, Henry, Willis, New Poets from Old, New York, Columbia University Press, 1940, 356 pp.

A study of literary Genetics. The author places special attention upon the influence of older poets upon contemporaries, and explains the difference between borrowings, and conscious or unconscious echoes.

Wells, Henry, W. and Carl F. Klinck, Edwin J. Pratt, The Man and His Poetry, Toronto: 1947, viii-197.

These authors stress the heroic note in the poetry of E.J. Pratt, but very often throughout the study the imagery is acknowledged.

Victoria College

Toronto

July 10, 1956

My dear Sister:

The delay in replying to your "Cape note" is due to my absence from the city for a few days.

You have done a wonderful piece of analysis and I feel honoured by its scope and, I may say, by its friendly treatment. It is the kind of attention I like - both critical and appreciative. I am glad that you placed "Dieben" at the top, as it is my favourite, for the story took hold of my soul. It has always been my belief that a life without a faith is the most miserable form of existence imaginable. Dieben, as the martyr, is one of the most dramatic and ineffable characters in history.

Your manuscript warmed my heart. When do you wish it returned, as I should like to re-read it?

Yours cordially,

E. J. Press

Victoria College

THE YORK CLUB

TORONTO

July 25, 1956

Dear Sister

There is no need to worry,
over a few type errors in your
manuscript. I made many myself
when I found the typewriter.
It is a pleasure for me to read
your letters and note your
enthusiasm.

Now ask about symbolism
and imagery.

The central idea to me was to
see how of a symbol which at
the time of the Crucifixion represented
the very limit of shame in the
eyes of the pagan world, and later
became the transcendent glory of
the Christian theology and experience,
namely, the Cross. I had to
end on that note.

It was necessary to move in
correlative ideas such as the
singing of the glory by the Fathers,
their staunch comradeship, their

Willingness to face their martyrdom,
their complete renunciation of
material gain and such life
consideration; and, technically,
for dramatic purposes, a rather
extensive description of the bull
before the storm broke. When
I took a trip to the Marquis
Shire near Midland I found
a spring of clear cold water
with water cress at the bottom.
I wondered if Berkeley saw it.

You also ask about the recording.
A few years ago I was invited to
Harvard University to give a course
of lectures. One was on Berkeley.
They asked me to make a recording
of Berkeley and short poems which
I did. Victoria College bought
one hundred copies and is ordering
more next October. The Librarian
may be in touch with you after
the summer holidays.

The very best to you,

James S. Macaulay,
E. J. Pratt

47 Glencairn Ave.

~~Victoria College~~
Toronto 8, Canada

July 21, 1957.

Dear Sister St. Dorothy Marie:

Your letter was forwarded to me from the
College by a roundabout route - hence the delay in answering.

I have no objection whatever to your task; in fact, I am
honoured by your interest.

First, I may point out that Sutherland brought out many
facets in my work of which I was unaware (or but dimly conscious)
at the time of writing, but of which I could see the partial
truths after re-reading his book. He did plough back into
the past to uncover the unconscious processes, and I was
amazed at the skill with which he did his microscopic analysis.
It is true that the microscope was hardly alive when it played upon
the squid and the cadaver but it brought into brilliant focus
the concluding pages of Breuer. Leafing through the "Collected
Poems" recently, I was astonished at the numerous references to
Christ, the Cross and the symbol of grace. Personally, I derived
more exaltation from the dying moments of Breuer than from
anything I ever selected as a subject.

Before answering your question about letters, may I mention
some poems which are undercurrents of my convictions.

1. "Before an Altar" page 95 (Collected Poems)
(2) To an Enemy 95
(3) The Empty Room 96
(4) The Iron Door 212
(5) Old Age 226
(6) A Segue 227 (In memory of my mother)
(7) The Highway 228
(8) The Decision 228 (To a dead student of mine)
(9) The Inuit 309.

The "Titanic" is an elaborated symbol of human resistance to a pagan
force of power divorced from all moral consideration. It was a monster
as the height of the Nazi regime. The Pangloss is personified Power
without kindness, mercy and love. The Titanic is a Christian who defies
this giant of might and is willing to suffer pain and death to
submission. The poem ends on the Rock the sublimest symbol of
Sacrificed Love.

Nature

Perhaps the Titanic may be chosen as the most complex example.
The ship itself may be taken as a protagonist of the story provided
other factors are taken into account. It is an illustration of
beauty, grace, magnitude and power but it also possesses a "flaw"
imposed upon it by its builders - the ambition of the White Star
Line to make the "perfect ship" and to that end she ran at top
speed through the ice-ice though warned of the danger by other ships.
The flaw was the belief in her invulnerability. Nature in the
existence of an iceberg proved to be overweening the hubris was.
The iceberg struck at the "Achilles heel" See page 114.

The Romantic and the Antique had to contend with Nature in
the form of the greatest storm on the Atlantic recorded in years.
There is no apparent evidence of a flaw in the traditional sense
it is a straight contest between human courage and devotion and
the terrific sea. Two lives indeed was lost but under no
"hubris".

In the "Great Fens" Nature gives the finishing blow to the
battle in the action of Guranua, the volcano, but the poem
is a dream of a universe. I think John Auden's
forgot the religious issue in this allegory, though his treatment
was superb.

The Keel is a simple struggle between sailors and
the elements.

I trust this will be of some help.

Yours most cordially,

E. J. Pratt

ABSTRACT

As the introduction states, this thesis purports to offer only one thing: a careful analysis of the imagery which is found in the poetry of Edwin John Pratt.

The epic trend of this poet's work has already been dealt with in a dissertation: The Epic Note in the Poetry of Edwin John Pratt, which was submitted to the University of Ottawa in 1955. Until now no study has been made of the imagery---and imagery is basic to poetry.

The thesis does not present an exact count of the images, nor offer an analysis of every poem written by this author. A representative number of poems has been deemed sufficient for illustration. The study, is more intensive than extensive. It is believed that the images both in isolation and in thematic trends may reveal something of the poet's personal world and mirror forth his outlook upon life. Since imagery is the central core of both language and poetry, it seems reasonable to suppose, therefore, that the poet's genius will appear most clearly in the figurative images he creates to convey his meaning; and that the study of the author's imagery will reveal his basic intuitions concerning reality.

Any essay on the subject of poetic imagery must begin by meeting the problem of definition, the problem of limiting the area in which it works. In Chapter One a simple, workable definition of imagery has been chosen. This is not a

concise text-book definition, rather it is a synthesis of what the writer believes to be the best elements culled from a number of definitions which deal with this subject. After the consideration of several methods to approach the topic, the sensuous, emotional and intellectual method was believed to be the most suitable. Over and above this technical grouping it was perceived that Pratt's images naturally fall into two main categories: images of nature and images of grace. The particular aspects of each of these classes was noted and illustrated with quotations from the poems. This chapter also includes a statement of what the writer considers to be the poet's attitude toward life, as revealed in his poetry; and it outlines the poetic pattern that seems to have been followed.

These first two sections of the thesis, the introduction and chapter one, are offered mainly for their "foundation" value. The essence of the study is found in the following chapters.

The study of the sensuous element in Chapter Two became too involved to be included in one unit. It was, therefore, divided into two main sections: the first, a study of the sea imagery; and the second a study of the nature imagery. Even these sub-divisions had again to be divided. In the visual imagery of the sea special attention is given to images of motion, color, light and darkness. In the aural imagery section it is sound and silence that is emphasized.

The general conclusion to be drawn after this examination is that Pratt is a poet of action. It is "the life of things" that appeals to him, stimulates him, and inspires his poetic endeavor; rather than beauty of color, or form, or even significance, although each of these has a particular role to play. The poet's attraction to motion is seen not only in the direct images which he takes from motion itself; but also in the interplay of colour and shadow and light and darkness. These make their strongest appeal by their coming and going, their contrast, their interchange of time and place, as well as by their difference in degree and manner. The poet is at all times keenly sensitive to the sounds of the sea, which range from the faintest musical notes, through martial tones that prelude war, on to the thunder of the surf and the roar on the reef. Images of silence also are of great importance. For Pratt sound, and especially raucous noise, is associated with upheaval. His belief that muted sounds or complete stillness, analogous of peace and happiness and prayer, is in evidence in his poems.

Any study of imagery must necessarily be a study of theme. "The Titanic" was studied in greater detail in order to ascertain the image trends that reveal the poetic pattern.

In the section devoted to the study of the sensuous element and the landscape, the topics that have been dealt with are: plants and flowers; trees and seeds; harvest and autumn; mist and vapor and fog; winds and hills and mountains;

sunlight and starlight; dawn and dusk; as well as moon and star images. The poet gives to his imagery an apparent independence within the poem. The appeal is to the ingeniously minded reader who enjoys seeing an apparently non-moral and non-didactic scene analyzed in moral and didactic terms.

The true image gives quality, creates atmosphere, and conveys emotion in a way that no specific or precise description, however clear or accurate, could do. Among the facts that are significant in the study of a Poet's deeper thoughts, there are, perhaps none of more profound import than his conception of life and death, good and evil, love and fear and hate. The third chapter deals with a study of these abstractions in the poetic world of the author.

The intellectual element of imagery studied in Chapter Four by a method of blending imparts a clearer perception of Pratt's fundamental ideas about reality. It manifests his ideals and shows forth the way he adheres to them. The sections outlined for special consideration are methodology, astronomy, astrology, historical and literary essence; as well as intellect, reason and will. The thesis is terminated by a study of the poet in relation to the sea and the conclusion is reached that in Pratt's imagery there is no room for subjectivism. Victories are won and defeats are suffered for the good of all mankind. On the vast and boundless ocean there is no room for self-glorification.

An annotated bibliography comments briefly on the content and value of the several reference books relative to imagery and poetic patterns that were found to be useful in the study; and also lists and evaluates the periodicals and reviews which have helped to prove the thesis.

This thesis submitted in 1958 to the Department of English Literature in the Faculty of Arts, of the University of Ottawa, Canada, in view of obtaining the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, contains 325 pages.