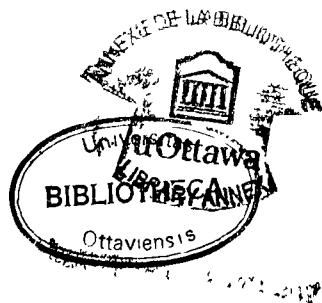


THE CONCEPT OF NATURE IN THE POETRY
OF COVENTRY PATMORE WITH SPECIAL
EMPHASIS UPON HIS INDEBTEDNESS TO
W. WORDSWORTH

by Sister Mary Joanna, S.S.I.C.

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Thesis presented to the Faculty of Arts
of the University of Ottawa through the
Department of English as partial fulfill-
ment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Arts.



Ottawa, Canada, 1959

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to explore the role played by nature in the poetry of Coventry Patmore, and to determine as far as possible the specific characteristics of Patmore's outlook on nature.

Little has been written concerning the poetical works of Coventry Patmore. Of the material which is available, the greater part deals with the poetry in general barely touching upon the topic under consideration. The most useful critical studies have been those of Basil Champneys ¹, Frederick Page ², and J.C. Reid ³. Only one periodical article makes reference to nature in Coventry Patmore's poetry, "Coventry Patmore, the Praise of the Odes" ⁴. As none of the critics deal exclusively or at any length with nature in his poetry, Coventry Patmore's prose criticism as well as his poetry has provided the material used in preparation of the thesis.

Where mention was made of the nature aspect of Patmore's work, it was agreed that evidence existed of the

¹ Basil Champneys, The Memoirs and Correspondence of Coventry Patmore.

² Frederick Page, Patmore, a Study in Poetry.

³ J.C. Reid, The Mind and Art of Coventry Patmore.

⁴ J.L. Garvin, "Coventry Patmore, the Praise of the Odes".

Influence of William Wordsworth's view of the external world. Hence it has been necessary to study William Wordsworth's concept of nature. This subject has been inadequately dealt with by experts in the field, notably Joseph Warren Beach.⁵ The first chapter, "The Concept of Nature in the Poetry of William Wordsworth", is based upon his research. The influence of William Wordsworth's thought as well as the expression of his nature philosophy as seen in his poetry was examined. The Macmillan edition⁶ of Wordsworth's poetry has been used for all poetry and prose quotations with the exception of the alternative version of "The Prelude"⁷ which is contained in the Appendix.

The second chapter is devoted to a study of the concept of nature developed by Coventry Patmore. The prose writings, collected essays and poetry have provided the best source material presently available. The Oxford edition of the poetry⁸ has been used for all quotations. As a result of the study of the philosophic influences on

⁵ Joseph Warren Beach, The Concept of Nature in Nineteenth Century English Poetry.

⁶ William Wordsworth, The Complete Poetry of William Wordsworth, London, Macmillan, 1950, V-924p.

⁷ E. De Selincourt, editor, The Prelude, the Versions of 1806 and 1850.

⁸ Frederick Page, editor, The Poems of Coventry Patmore, London, Oxford, 1949, V-506p.

Coventry Patmore's thought and the examination of his poetry, his concept of nature is defined.

The third chapter is a comparative study of the theories of both poets concerning the role of the poet, and prosody. A similar outlook on the principle problems of prosody caused the poetry of William Wordsworth and Coventry Patmore to have much in common.

The concluding chapter is a careful examination of the nature poetry of Coventry Patmore with a view to determining the type of interest shown in nature. As a result of this survey it has been possible to indicate the position of Coventry Patmore in the school of nature poets.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CONCEPT OF NATURE IN THE POETRY OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

The concept of nature which is found in the works of William Wordsworth is a combination of many elements. In order to understand the essence of Wordsworth's outlook on nature it is necessary to examine each of these elements as they appear in his poetry and prose. It is not the purpose of this study to formulate a new theory concerning this nature concept but rather to act as a preparation for the study of the nature concept used by Coventry Patmore. Hence this chapter is based on work carried out by scholars who are experts in this field, in particular Joseph Warren Beach.¹

Since Wordsworth's own ideas of external nature underwent considerable changes in the early years of the nineteenth century, the greater portion of this survey will deal with the early poetry, principally the poems of Lyrical Ballads. In the poetry written in the last years of the eighteenth century and as late as 1807, there is found one distinct point of view concerning nature. However, during the following years, although he remained a lover of nature, Wordsworth shifted his position to a more conventional outlook. Moreover with the passage of time

¹ Joseph Warren Beach, The Concept of Nature in Nineteenth Century English Poetry, New York, Pageant, 1957, ix-618p.

Wordsworth came to regret the outbursts of pantheism found in his early poetry. Hence he revised and modified much of it, eliminating or at least changing the meaning of some of the more outstanding references to nature. This is especially true of The Prelude. For this reason, although the revised version of the 1850 edition has been used in the body of the thesis the original passages as they appeared in the 1806-1807 version have been included in the Appendix.² As a result of this change in outlook it has been necessary to limit this survey to the early nature poetry, including only those poems written up to the time of the completion of The Prelude in 1807.

Long before he made any attempt to express his feelings in verse, Wordsworth became acquainted with the delights of nature. As a result of time spent in the country as a child, he learned to love the beauties of the external world. Gradually he formulated his theory concerning the role of nature, basing it upon the experiences of his childhood and youth. Since he acquired much learning from nature he came to look upon her as a teacher. The order in the universe tended to lead him to the idea of order in his own life and thence to a sense of moral values.

² E. De Selincourt, editor, The Prelude, or Growth of the Poet's Mind, by William Wordsworth, London, Oxford, 1926, vii-614p.

This was not the result of reasoning but rather of continued observation of the regularity of nature.

Then Nature said, "A lovelier flower
On earth was never seen:
This Child I to myself will take;
She shall be mine, and I will make
A lady of my own.

"Myself will to my darling be
Both law and impulse: and with me
The girl, in rock and plain,
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,
Shall feel an overseeing power
To kindle or restrain."³

Nature as a teacher is mentioned many times in these early poems:

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.

Sweet is the lore which nature brings,
Our meddling intellect
Misshapes the beauteous forms of things,-
We murder to dissect.⁴

And again:

.....well pleased to recognize
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.⁵

³William Wordsworth, "Lucy", Part Four, ll.57-68.

⁴William Wordsworth, "Tables Turned", ll.22-32.

⁵William Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey", ll.106-111.

Nature, working for man's good, uses the pleasure and pain which result from intercourse with her to provide mankind with a moral guide. Wordsworth believed that nature's more pleasant aspects which gave man joy were capable of teaching man the right course of action. However, when the desired action was not performed, nature used pain as a method of warning him.

In the system of philosophic thought used by Wordsworth in his poetry, terms are given different meanings from those used in Scholastic Philosophy. According to the poet, the imagination is a passive faculty where sense perceptions are stored. A number of these sense perceptions would eventually of themselves produce an idea. The imagination does not possess the twofold aspect of Scholastic imagination, that of reproducing sensible reality already experienced, (the retentive aspect), and that of producing new material from that already known, (the creative aspect). In one respect, the imagination as Wordsworth sees it is comparable to the Scholastic term imagination, since it is capable of reproducing scenes which the poet had already experienced.

Since the imagination was thus responsible for the formation of ideas, it was necessary for the poet to remain close to the source of his inspiration in order that his

senses might send forth a continual stream of sensations to his imagination. This in part explains Wordsworth's belief that a child should be permitted to live in close contact with external nature. The passive mind, the mind lying latent for ideas, would in this manner be filled with images of nature's beauty.

The eye,-it cannot choose but see;
We cannot bid the ear be still;
Our bodies feel, wher'er they be,
Against or with our will.

Nor less I deem that there are powers
Which of themselves our minds impress;
That we can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness.

Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum
Of things forever speaking,
But nothing of itself will come
But we must still be seeking? ⁶

Having observed the unity in nature, the set laws of the seasons, the regularity of the heavens, Wordsworth came to believe in a world soul which was both rational and sensitive. The individual parts of nature, grass, trees, flowers, all shared in the spirit of the universe; each possessing a soul of its own. By the term soul, Wordsworth means a vital principle.

⁶ William Wordsworth, "Expostulation and Reply",
11.17-28.

Thus the specific soul of each animal is made possible by the general soul of the world, and is as it were an expression of this general soul, just as the active principle of "each form of being" in Wordsworth is an expression of, a parcel of, the Soul of all the Worlds, which circulates everywhere.⁷

In "Lines Written in Early Spring" Wordsworth states:

And 'tis my faith that every flower
Breathes the air it breathes.⁸

The same thought is expressed:

.....And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is in the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky and the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

His contemplation of the soul of nature led Wordsworth to see it as an active principle, governing, ordering and regulating the universe. Whereas earlier poets had seen nature's activity as an example of the working of Divine Providence or as having been set in motion originally by Divine Providence and left to operate in accordance with set laws, Wordsworth neither admits nor denies that he holds this idea.

⁷ Joseph Warren Beach, op.cit., p.64.

⁸ William Wordsworth, "Lines Written in Early Spring", 11.11-12.

¹ William Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey", 11.94-102.

With regard to deistic, or pantheistic, literature in general, we may say that it is unorthodox in its desire to substitute the natural for the supernatural, or to identify the two, or to lay the main stress on the natural. The divine, of supernatural, is conceived of as working invariably through the laws of nature, so that everything in the universe, both physical and moral, is explainable in terms of nature.¹⁰

However, Wordsworth puts himself against the materialism permeating contemporary science. The nearest he comes to defining his concept of this active principle is found in the above quotation from "Tintern Abbey". It is obvious that here he refers to the soul as his active principle. The mention of a "presence" tends to place Wordsworth with those who are theistic in their outlook, but not explicitly so. In reference to much the same process he states:

Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe!
 Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought
 That givest forms and images a breath
 And everlasting motion, not in vain
 By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
 Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
 The passions that build up our human soul;
 Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
 But with high objects, with enduring things,-
 With life and nature- purifying thus
 The elements of feeling and of thought,
 And sanctifying by such discipline
 Both pain and fear, until we recognise
 A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.¹¹

¹⁰

Joseph Warren Beach, op.cit., p.116.

¹¹

William Wordsworth, "The Prelude", Book One, 11.401-414. (Original version is given in the Appendix).

He has this time associated the "presence" of "Tintern Abbey" with God. Thus Wordsworth came to be a pantheist for he had found God in nature, substituting his love for the universe for religious belief.

Linking together Wordsworth's belief in the world soul and his teaching concerning the active principle in nature in his theory of associationism which he derived at least in part from Hartley.¹² He postulated an active soul existing from the beginning of man's life wherein the impulses which were received by the senses could be directed, sorted and stored. The comparison of these sensory impulses would lead eventually to new knowledge. Thus, the association of one stimulus with another would give greater knowledge.

12

David Hartley, 1705-1757, an English physician and philosopher. He is the founder of the Association school of psychology which he outlined in his Observations On Man, 1749. This is a study of the human mind, of its constitution (part one) and of religion and morals (part two). All mental phenomena is reduced to the sensation and association of vibrations. Hartley does not identify the brain with the thinking faculty or soul, for the vibrations merely affect the body; the sensations the soul. Repeated sensations leave traces which are simple ideas.

.....Hartley's leading doctrine is that our simpler ideas are sensations compounded, our more complex ideas are our simpler ideas compounded; that there is no such thing as innate ideas, but that, in the course of our lives, through association of pleasure or pain with certain experiences, we build up the higher sentiments. We build them up out of, ultimately the simpler elements offered by our sensations, and arrive at last at such complex ideal structures as imagination, ambition, self-interest, sympathy with our fellows, and a feeling for God, and, as culmination of all the moral sense.The general direction which Wordsworth follows is the same- from sensation to idea, and from idea to sentiment. 13

Throughout the whole of "Tintern Abbey" the poet develops his theory of associationism. In actual fact Wordsworth differed from the strict adherents of associationism in that he demanded an active soul as the starting point of his belief whereas they were satisfied that the senses acquired knowledge without the soul. The sense perceptions themselves build up the imagination according to these strict associationists.

Separating Wordsworth from the theistic philosophers of nature and from the associationists was his retention of the Platonic teaching of innate ideas. Even when he came to admit the creation of the human soul by God, Wordsworth retained this belief.

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
 The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
 Hath had elsewhere its setting
 And cometh from afar;
 Not in entire forgetfulness,
 And not in utter nakedness,
 But trailing clouds of glory do we come
 From God who is our home:
 Heaven lies about us in our infancy. 14

Wordsworth pictured the soul as being very close to nature in its early years on earth as a result of its former knowledge of the world. It was the soul which enabled the child to experience a sense of awe at the beauty of the world. Wordsworth at first was lavish in his praise of nature's part in man's' formation:

.....Blest the Babe,
 Nursed in his Mother's arms, who sinks to sleep
 Rocked on his Mother's breast; with his soul
 Drinks in the feelings of his Mother's eye!
 For him, in one dear Presence, there exists
 A virtue which irradiates and exalts
 Objects through wildest intercourse of sense.
 No outcast he, bewildered and depressed:
 Along his infant veins are interfused
 The gravitation and the filial bond
 Of nature that connect him with the world. 15

Gradually nature in teaching the child of the wonders of the universe, draws him away from this sense of immortality. As his kinship with nature increases his memory of God

14
 William Wordsworth, "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality", ll.58-66.

15
 William Wordsworth, "The Prelude", Book Two, ll.234-244 (Alternate version is in the Appendix.)

and of his own pre-existence diminish to the point of vague recollection. Wordsworth came to blame nature for her part in this separation:

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;
 Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
 And, even with something of a Mother's mind,
 And no unworthy aim,
 The homely nurse doth all she can
 To make her Foster-child, her Inmate, Man,
 Forget the glories he hath known,
 And that imperial palace whence he came.¹⁶

Speaking of this changed outlook Joseph Warren Beach writes:

So far from nature's being the "nurse,
 the guide, the guardian" of the soul, as she was
 regarded in "Tintern Abbey", she is an agency for
 weaning the child's spirit from the thought of
 his spiritual origin. She is still referred to
 as a nurse, to be sure, but her action is described
 in very different terms.¹⁷

In keeping with the Romantic tradition, Wordsworth looked upon man in his primitive state as the most perfect human being.

Wordsworth's preference of country to town, like that of many eighteenth century poets, is probably somewhat colored by the romantic legend of a Golden Age, in which man's heart and manners were still natural, uncorrupted by institutions and ideas which had swerved from the simplicity of nature. Wordsworth's view of the child and the peasant as beings particularly close to nature and sharing in her wisdom is analogous to the romantic view of the savage or primitive man, though Wordsworth does not seem to have taken much stock himself in this conception of the "noble savage".¹⁸

¹⁶ William Wordsworth, "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality", ll.78-85.

¹⁷ Joseph Warren Beach, op.cit., p.152-153.

¹⁸ Joseph Warren Beach, op.cit., p.202-203.

According to Wordsworth, residents of the country, especially if they were children, peasants or shepherds, would be in such constant contact with nature that they would retain their simplicity and sense of right values. His language would be richer and purer because of his intercourse with external beauty. While Wordsworth did not suggest that society should go off to remote regions to recapture its primitive simplicity, he did show a preference for rural life both in his own choice of residence and in his work. Writing in 1800, he says:

Humble and rustic life was generally chosen because in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because of that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity;and lastly because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature. 19

Although he advocated the use of the incidents of everyday rural life as subjects of poetry, in actual fact Wordsworth did not remain close to his theory. The philosophical language of much of his verse is not closely related to the speech of ordinary folk. Nor are all the scenes which he chooses those which would be of interest to the rural population in general.

¹⁹ William Wordsworth, "Preface", to Lyrical Ballads, p.850.

It is possible to see the influence of Rousseau in Wordsworth's interest in the externals of nature in his idealisation of childhood. However the doctrine as used by Wordsworth is somewhat diluted to suit the taste of his English readers. He retained Rousseau's teaching concerning the simple man, unspoiled by society and its conventions, as is seen in the previous quotation from his "Preface" to Lyrical Ballads.

In the second book of Emile Rousseau dwells much on the value for young children of the knowledge that comes to them through their senses in the course of mere animal play. In this connection he makes the distinction between the sensitive reason and the intellectual reason, the former being the foundation of the latter. The sensitive reason is much more active in the child and natural to him; and it is not wise to try to force a too early development of the intellectual reason, which, if forced, will only result in a specious and retifical wisdom. ²⁰

Using his own life as an example, Wordsworth distinguished two distinct stages in his relationship with nature. In his early years, the years described in the first books of The Prelude and in a more abridged form in "Tintern Abbey", there was an animal passion for beauty.

20

Joseph Warren Beach, op.cit., p.192.

.....For nature then
 (The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
 And their glad animal movements all gone by)
 To me was all in all. -I cannot paint
 What then I was. The sounding cataract
 Haunted me like a passion. The tall rock,
 The mountain and the deep and gloomy wood,
 Their colours and their forms, were then to me
 An appetite; a feeling and a love,
 That had no need of a remoter charm,
 By thought supplied, nor any interest
 Unborrowed from the eye. ²¹

With the passage of time, this passionate love of nature gradually ripened into a metaphysical outlook.

.....Nor for this
 Faint I, nor mourn, nor murmur; other gifts
 Have followed; for such loss, I would believe
 Abundant recompense. For I have learned
 To look on nature, not as in the hour
 Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
 The still sad music of humanity,
 Not harsh, not grating, though of ample power
 To chasten and subdue. ²²

Wordsworth realised that he had reached a higher level of understanding of nature. He had discovered the soul which informed all parts of nature and as a consequence he could meditate more readily on the various aspects of the universe. Wordsworth continued to enjoy the beauty of the world, but in a spiritual rather than in a physical sense.

²¹

William Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey", ll.72-83.

²²

William Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey", ll.85-93.

.....Nor less, I trust,
 To them I may have owed another gift,
 Of aspect more sublime; That blessed mood,
 In which the burthen of the mystery,
 In which the heavy and the weary weight
 Of all this unintelligible world,
 Is lightened:-that serene and blessed mood,
 In which the affections gently lead us on,-
 Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
 And even the motion of our human blood
 Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
 In body, and become a living soul:
 While with an eye made quiet by the power
 Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
 We see into the life of things. 23

Nature brought with her gifts which she was pleased to bestow on her loyal followers. The scenes which the poet had visited in his youth, all the examples of beauty which he had viewed throughout the years, remained with him as a source of solace and contentment in his hours of need.

The music in my heart I bore
 Long after it was heard no more. 24

And again:

For oft when on my couch I lie
 In vacant or in pensive mood,
 They flash upon that inward eye
 Which is the bliss of solitude;
 And then my heart with pleasure fills,
 And dances with the daffodils. 25

23

William Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey" 36-50.

24

William Wordsworth, "The Solitary Reaper", 11.30-31

25

William Wordsworth, "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud", 11.16-24.

The same delight in the scenes of the past is expressed in "Tintern Abbey".²⁶ Here too, Wordsworth explains to his sister, Dorothy, that she will come to rely on the beauty she has seen for comfort in the future.

A second consequence of the beneficence of nature toward the poet was a belief that she always worked for man's betterment.

Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her.²⁷

With this concept of nature's benevolence, he could be at peace even when nature appeared to rebel and destroyed the property of man and even man himself. Wordsworth at one point expresses this:

A thought is with me sometimes, and I say,-
Should the whole frame of earth by inward throes
Be wrenched, or fire come down from far to scorch
Her pleasant habitations, and dry up
Old Ocean, in his bed left singed and bare,
Yet would the living Presence still subsist
Victorious, and composure would ensue,
And kindlings like the morning- presage sure
Of day returning and of life revived.²⁸

However, it must be admitted that Wordsworth seemed much more at home with nature in her gentler moods than in her disturbances. It is the sunny days, calm waters and

26. William Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey", ll.22-36 and 49-64.
27. William Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey", ll.122-123.
28. William Wordsworth, "The Prelude" Book Five, ll.29-37.

starlight which are found on most pages of his work rather than raging winds, crashing waves and lightning-streaked skies. In this respect Wordsworth differs from Lord Byron who is at his best in his descriptions of the wilder aspects of nature.

Once he had identified himself and all mankind with nature, Wordsworth became very much interested in the brotherhood of man.

.....'Tis nature's law
That none, the meanest of created things,
Or forms created the most vile and brute,
The dullest or most noxious, should exist
Divorced from good- a spirit and a pulse of good,
A life and soul, to every mode of being
Inseparably linked. ²⁹

All mankind were his brothers and he wished to share his joy in nature with them. This theme gathered strength with the years and much of Wordsworth's later verse was written to extol or to aid the causes of mankind.

It has been said of Wordsworth that: "It might seem that Nature not only gave him the matter for his poem, but wrote his poem for him. ³⁰ His work shows that his concept of nature was a blending of varying ideas which caused him to look on nature now as a philosopher, now as a teacher, now as a moralist, but always and everywhere as a poet.

²⁹ William Wordsworth, "The Old Cumberland Beggar", ll.74-80
³⁰ Matthew Arnold, "Essays in Criticism", New York; Bart, (no date), p.359.

Contemplating his belief in the world-soul, Wordsworth came ultimately to understand that the human soul was spiritual; pondering the beauties of external nature he arrived at a glimpse of the beauty of its Creator. Enjoying the comfort and peace that the memories of past with nature had brought him, Wordsworth came to set a great value on the universe as a source of beautiful thoughts which could be recalled in time of need. Loving nature in all her varying moods, he nevertheless concentrated on her gentler and more playful aspects. Thus his passionate love of his youth mellowed into a deep spiritual joy.

For the purpose of this study, Wordsworthian nature can be defined as a pantheistic outlook on the universe; a love of the sensory satisfactions resulting from an intimate contact with external beauty, especially those resulting from sight and hearing; an appreciation of the joy, peace and consolation resulting from this contact.

The work of William Wordsworth as a nature poet did not halt after 1807, when he gradually shifted his position into more conservative lines. In his footsteps came other poets, carrying an equally passionate love for nature in their hearts. Among them was Coventry Patmore, much like his master in theme, yet different from him in other aspects.

In the subsequent chapters Patmore's poetry will be examined in the light of Wordsworth's concept of nature.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CONCEPT OF NATURE IN THE POETRY OF COVENTRY PATMORE

Throughout the poetry of Coventry Patmore there is visible an intense interest in nature. As a result of his early study of the poets of the Romantic School, the first of his published verse conformed rather closely to the norms which that group of writers had established. Although Patmore retained his love of nature throughout his life, the work of his maturity displays the beauties of the external world with a sparing hand. There is a slight change in Patmore's poetic outlook following his conversion to Catholicism in 1863. For the purpose of this study, the poetry selections which Coventry Patmore permitted to be reprinted during his lifetime have been used. The prose, as collected in Religio Poetae and Principle in Art and Other Essays, has been used to provide Patmore's ideas about poetry and his criticism of other poets.

During his childhood, Coventry Patmore spent some time in the country. From this early contact with nature he came to know and love the beauty of the universe. These early years were marked by what Patmore later refers to as visions. In the brief autobiography which he left, Patmore

mentions these occurrences:

Angels spoke from time to time to me, as they do to all, and I frequently saw, as others do in youth, the things of earth lighted up with light which was not of the earth; and I was endowed with what, from my subsequent experience of man, I am obliged to conclude was an unusual faculty for implicitly believing my own eyes, without regard to the present defect of the visible continuity between their reports and the facts of the natural and external life. The things I saw in those rare moments when the properly human eye was open, remained with me as abiding landmarks, and were the jewels of my life. ¹

In a sonnet printed in his first volume of verse Patmore refers to his early contact with the beauty of the world.

My childhood was a vision heavenly wrought;
Vast joys, of which I sometimes dream, yet fail
To recollect sufficient to bewail,
And now forever seek, came then unsought.
But thought's denying feeling,--every thought
Some buried feeling's ghost, a spirit pale,--
Sprang up, and wordy nothings could prevail
In juggle with my soul. Since, better taught:
Truth-seeking contemplation, light that solves
Doubts without logic, rose in logic's room.
Then faith came back; and hope, that faith involves;
And joys--rare stars! which though they not illumine
The clouded night, have glory that dissolves
And strikes to quick transparence all its gloom. ²

¹
Basil Champneys, The Memoirs and Correspondence of Coventry Patmore, Vol.2, p.44.

²
Frederick Page, Patmore, A Study in Poetry, p.36..

These joys of natural beauty which Patmore learned to appreciate as a child became with the years the storehouse from which he drew material for his poetry. His first published verse, Poems of 1844, is mainly descriptive poetry in which nature plays a leading part. Although these poems have been revised several times, they still retain a great deal of true nature poetry. Despite the fact that there are non-descriptive elements in each of the works of this volume, the poet seems to be more intent upon giving an accurate picture of the landscape than in recording human emotions. It is nature description for its own sake, not nature as a symbol as is the case with the later work.

The ivied turrets seem to love
 The low, protected leas;
 And, though this manor-hall hath seen
 The snow of centuries,
 How freshly still it stands amid
 Its wealth of swelling trees!

The leafy summer-time is young;
 The yearling lambs are strong;
 The sunlight glances merrily;
 The trees are full of song;
 The valley-loving river flows
 Contentedly along.³

"The Falcon", which was written at the same period abounds with descriptive passages of the same type. Early in the poem, Sir Hubert surveys the beauty of his lands.

³

Coventry Patmore, "The River", ll.19-30.

The wind was newly risen, and the airy skies were rife
 With fleets of sailing cloudlets, and the trees were
 all in strife,
 Extravagantly triumphant at their newly gotten life.

Birds wrangled in the branches, with a trouble of
 sweet noise;
 Even the conscious cuckoo, judging wisest to rejoice,
 Shook round his cuckoo, cuckoo, as if careless of
 his voice. ⁴

Much the same type of description is contained in the third poem of the volume, "The Woodman's Daughter". In the Collected Works, these are all that remain of the first book of Patmore's verse. The poet is so intent upon reproducing faithfully the scenes with which he is familiar that he does not delay unnecessarily long in mentioning the violent deaths which occur in these poems. Even as late as "Tamerton Church Tower" 1853-54, Patmore is more concerned with the fury of the storm than with the fate of the storm-tossed boat.

O, bolt foreseen before it burst!
 O, chastening hard to bear!
 O, cup of sweetness quite revers'd,
 And turn'd to void despair!
 Blanche in fear swooning, I let go
 The helm; we struck the ground;
 The sea fell in from stern to prow,
 And Blanche, my Bride was drown'd. ⁵

⁴ Coventry Patmore, "The Falcon", 11.49-55.

⁵ Coventry Patmore, "Tamerton Church Tower", 371-379.

With no more attention to the characters, Patmore goes on with the description of the storm. In actual life, Patmore was not without feeling, yet he seemed incapable of expressing compassion in his early poetry. With regard to another storm, Page writes:

Of the thunderstorm in Victories of Love Ruskin says that, "professing myself rather a judge of thunderstorms, I am prepared to assert this the best thunderstorm ever done; "he might have said as much of the squall in "Tamerton Church-Tower".⁶

While Patmore looked upon nature as being in sympathy with man in all his moods, he did not consider her as a moral guide. Throughout his verse nature smiles when man is happy, and shows her dark and gloomy side when man is suffering. However, in no instance does Patmore look upon nature as a teacher. Rather he looks beyond nature to her Author, to find the answer to his problems. Since man's moods and external nature are so often in accord with each other in actual life, Patmore uses this device to strengthen the emotional background of his poetry. This can be illustrated particularly well from "Tamerton Church-Tower". All the scenes on the journey toward Tamerton are gay, in keeping with the high spirits of the travellers. The

6

Frederick Page, op.cit., p.47.

return journey is dark and dismal for tragedy has removed all the pleasure from life for the rider. An instance of the unity of feeling between nature and man is seen in the following quotation:

And, as I passed from Tavistock,
 The scattered dwellings white,
 The Church, the golden weather-cock,
 Were whelm'd in happy light;
 The children 'gan the sun to greet,
 With song and senseless shout,
 The lambs to skip, their dams to bleat;
 In Tavy leapt the trout;
 Across a fleeting eastern cloud,
 The splendid rainbow sprang,
 And larks invisible and loud,
 Within its zenith sang.⁷

Throughout his life, Coventry Patmore retained a child's sense of awe and wonder whenever he was confronted with things which were too large to be comprehended. He was fascinated by the sea, by the heavens, by the thought of eternity. Patmore never ceased to have a feeling of awe and surprise when he came in sight of the ocean. The memory of his reaction on first seeing the endless stretch of water, as a child, remained with him. The sea, whether as actually described or used in a symbolic sense in the Odes, is one of Patmore's most frequently used scenes.

7

Coventry Patmore, "Tamerton Church-Tower", ll.127-140.

Typical of his sea-scapes is the following:

Whene'er mine eyes do my Amelia greet
 It is with such emotion
 As when, in childhood, turning a dim street,
 I first beheld the ocean.
 There, where the little, bright, surf-breathing town,
 That show'd me first her beauty and the sea,
 Gathers its skirts against the gorse-lit down
 And scatters gardens o'er the southern lea,
 Abides this Maid.

The largeness of the sky interested Patmore. Clouds abound throughout his work--clouds viewed by daylight and dusk, clouds seen in sunshine and rain. The heavens, the stars with their countless patterns, were symbols for him of the immensity of the universe. They appear quite often in his work.

When I behold the skies aloft
 Passing the pageantry of dreams,
 The cloud whose bosom, cygnet-soft,
 A couch for Juno seems.

And again:

The restless moon, among the clouds,
 Is loitering slowly by;
 Now in a circle like a ring
 About a weeping eye;
 Now left quite bare and bright; and now
 A pallor in the sky. 10

8

Coventry Patmore, "Amelia", ll.1-9.

9

Coventry Patmore, Angel in the House, Canto 2,

ll.1-4.

10

Coventry Patmore, "The River", ll.85-90.

Of the sunset he writes:

I drew the silk; in heaven the night
 Was dawning; lovely Venus shone,
 In languishment of tearful light,
 Swathed by the red breath of the sun. 11

In somewhat the same manner the continuity of the seasons was a source of wonder. The recurring of spring, the knowledge of spring's coming inherent in plant life, made Patmore pause and contemplate.

The crocus, while the days are dark,
 Unfolds its saffron sheen;
 At April's touch, the crudest bank
 Discovers gems of green. 12

Much the same outlook is seen in the ode, "St. Valentine's Day", which treats of the arrival of spring.

However, the beauties of nature as described by Patmore are in the form of landscapes rather than in the form of descriptions of specific examples of the universe's charms. While he notices the flowers and the grass, he also includes in his picture the clouds, the sunshine and the children at play. His attention wanders over the whole of the scene before him, noting the individual parts but not lingering overly long on any one of them. Even though

11
 11.1-5 Coventry Patmore, The Angel in the House, Canto 11, 5,
 12
 Coventry Patmore, "The Seasons", 11:1-4.

the descriptive passages as such become fewer in the later poetry, Patmore retained his sense of wonder before the glories of the universe. In the Odes this love of natural beauty becomes the symbol of human love. Yet even in the mystical of the odes there are flashes of the poet's deep love of nature.

Examples of this landscape description are scattered throughout the poetry.

The heavy sign-board swung and shriek'd,
 In dark air whirl'd the vane,
 Blinds flapp'd, dust rose, and, straining, creak'd
 The shaken window-pane;
 And just o'er head, a huge cloud flung,
 For earnest of its stores,
 A few calm drops, that struck among
 The light-leaved sycamores. 13

From The Angel in the House;

A stately rainbow came and stood,
 When I was young, in High-Hurst Park;
 Its bright feet lit the hill and wood
 Beyond, and cloud and sward were dark;
 And I, who thought the splendour ours
 Because the place was, t'wards it flew,
 And there, amidst the glittering showers,
 Gazed vainly for the glorious view. 14

The philosophical thought which provided the basis for Patmore's outlook on nature was not derived from any one source. Early in life he became a student of the Platonic school of philosophy. Despite the changes brought by time and

13 Coventry Patmore, "Tamerton Church-Tower", 11.122-28.

14 Coventry Patmore, The Angel in the House, Canto 11, 11.21-28.

his conversion to Catholicism, Patmore retained some of its tenets to the end of his life. Indeed, the modern philosophers from whom he obtained his concepts regarding man's position in the universe, were all to some extent followers of Plato-- Kant, Swedenborg. The sole exception was St. Thomas Aquinas, who in time became the main philosophic influence in his system of thought. In some instances Patmore preferred the non-Scholastic terms and their definitions to those of the Scholastic school. It is this tendency to use seemingly Scholastic terminology with meanings in whole or in part at variance with those accepted by this school, which makes it necessary to define the principal terms used by Patmore in his prose.

That Coventry Patmore began his study of Plato as a youth, is beyond all doubt. His father, writing of the poet's boyhood, tells of his reading Plato where others would have spent the time on less serious material.¹⁵ Although the scene may be somewhat exaggerated by Peter George Patmore's desire to praise his son, yet it does give some notion of Patmore's reading as a youth.

15

Basil Champneys, The Memoirs and Correspondence of Coventry Patmore, Vol 1, p.47.

The Platonic doctrine that the material objects of the universe had no value of themselves, but only insofar as they were images of the eternal beauty and truth, was accepted by Patmore. This enabled him to move from the material to the spiritual realms of being with ease. Plato taught that the knowledge which man has of immutable, eternal objects must have been attained at some time by the soul. In order to explain our knowledge, Plato supposes an existence for the soul, before its union with the body. As a result of this previous existence, all learning is remembering. Patmore seems to have accepted Plato's teaching on this matter for in the early poetry he wrote:

At times, some gap in sequence frees the spirit, and anon,
 We remember states of living ended ere we left the womb,
 And rise a vague aurora flashing to us from the tomb,
 The dreamy light of new states, dash'd tremendously with
 gloom.

We tremble for an instant, and a single instant more
 Brings absolute oblivion, and we pass on as before!
 Ev'n so those dreadful glimpses come, and startled
 and were o'er. 16

That the same outlook remained with Coventry Patmore during the length of his career as a poet, is seen from the study of the Odes. Writing of somewhat the same circumstances

16

Coventry Patmore, "The Yew-Berry", ll. 33-39.

Patmore states:

Beautiful habitations, auras of delight,
 In childish years and since had sometime sense and sight,
 But that ye vanish'd quite,
 Even from memory,
 Ere I could get my breath, and whisper "See!"
 But did for me
 They altogether die,
 Those trackless glories glimps'd in upper sky?

Often in straits which else for me were ill,
 I mind me still
 I DID respire the lonely auras sweet,
 I DID the blest abodes behold, and, at the
 mountains' feet,
 Bathed in the holy stream by Hermon's thymy hill.¹⁷

The visions of which Patmore wrote in his autobiography seem to be in keeping with this belief. This is especially true if the vision is looked upon as a flash of knowledge, an insight, a remembering.

The soul contains world upon world of the most real of realities of which it has no consciousness until it is awakened to their existence by some parable or metaphor, some strain of rhythm or music, some combination of form or colour, some scene of beauty or sublimity, which suddenly expresses the inexpressible by a lower likeness.¹⁸

Although Patmore did not hold all the theories of the Platonic school, he nevertheless acquired a Platonic outlook toward the universe. This is manifest in his interest in the link between material and immaterial things, and in his

¹⁷ Coventry Patmore, "Auras of Delight", ll.33-40; 49-55.

¹⁸ Coventry Patmore, Religio Poetae, "Imagination", p.506.

desire to achieve the highest possible spiritual perfection by the use of the intellect. Patmore looked upon the beings of the world as mere representations of the spiritual beings, the inhabitants of the spiritual and perfect world.

The philosophic thought of Immanuel Kant, in particular his doctrine of transcendental idealism, was accepted in part by Coventry Patmore. According to the teachings of Kant the existence of the external world could be accepted, but he denied that such a world could ever be a subject of knowledge. Only the appearances of the universe could be known. Thus objects are known, not in themselves, but as they appear under the subjective forms of sensibility and intelligence. Speaking of Kant's idealism, J.W. Beach writes:

To a Transcendentalist, Matter has an existence but only as a Phenomenon; were we not there, neither would it be there; it is a mere Relation, or rather the result of a Relation between our living Souls and the great First Cause; and depends for its apparent qualities on our bodily and mental organs having itself no intrinsic qualities; being; in the common sense of that word, Nothing. ¹⁹

19

Joseph Warren Beach, op.cit., p.305, citing Thomas Carlyle, "Essay on Novalis", Works, Vol.27, 24-25.

Patmore's agreement with this theory is seen in the prose work.

The state of mind is the true subject, the natural phenomena the terms in which it is uttered; and there never has been a greater critical fallacy than that contained in Mr. Ruskin's structures on the "pathetic fallacy". Nature has no beauty or pathos (using the term in its widest sense) but that with which the mind invests it. Without the imaginative eye it is like a flower in the dark, which is only beautiful as having in it a power of reflecting the colours of the light. The light of nature is the human eye; and if the light of the human eye is darkness, as it is in those who see nothing but surfaces, how great is that darkness! 20

It was the trait of looking beyond the material to find the spiritual, which attracted Patmore's attention. Of this metaphysical idealism J.W. Beach writes:

And metaphysical idealism passes over insensibly into its religious phase when the whole universe is conceived of as the manifestation, not of our human thought but of the eternal thought of God - as a product of the Divine Idea. Thus Nature is not simply "the reflex of our inward Force" but, "what the Earth-Spirit in Faust names it, the living visible Garment of God." 21

Patmore's idealism was of this variety. It enabled him to have a spiritualised outlook on the importance of the external world.

²⁰ Coventry Patmore, Religio Poetae, "Imagination" p.306.

²¹ Joseph Warren Beach, op.cit., p.306, citing Thomas Carlyle, Sartor Resartus, Vol.1, Ch.8, p.43.

The third great influence on Patmore's philosophic thought was Emanuel Swedenborg.²² Like Plato and Kant, he taught that the material world existed only as a symbol of the immaterial, spiritual world. However, Patmore utilised Swedenborg's theory of Correspondences more than his doctrine of spiritual ascendancy. This teaching had a great influence on The Angel in the House, and traces of it can be found in the Odes. According to this doctrine as Swedenborg himself explains it:

Not only is there a correspondence between the outward creation and the spiritual world, there is also an intimate relation between Nature and the Spirit of man. As outward Nature is the embodiment of Divine ideas, and man was created "in the image and likeness of God", there is a correspondence of all things in man with all things of the physical universe. There is a natural and a spiritual heaven and earth; there are spiritual sun, moon, and stars; there are mountains, hills, valleys, and plains of the soul; there are trees, flowers, and poisonous plants; there are birds, beasts and reptiles and insects; in fact everything which we see around us has its counterpart in our spiritual nature.²³

²² Emanuel Swedenborg, 1688 - 1772, a Swedish scientist and philosopher. Up until 1745 he worked in the fields of mathematics and physical science. Swedenborg published Philosophical and Mineral Works, 1743 and On the Infinite and Final Cause of Creation, 1744, a study of the relation of soul and body. After 1745 he turned to the study of theology, eventually founding his own church, that of the New Jerusalem.

²³ Trobridge, Life of Emanuel Swedenborg, London, Warner, v-337.p., p.173.

Swedenborg also combined in his philosophy the idealism of Kant with the concept of external reality of the materialists. From the former he accepted the certainty of intuitive, interior perceptions; from the latter the reality of outward impressions. Together these concepts led him to formulate his teaching of the Providence of God as seen in nature. The transition from the idealism of Kant to the spiritual doctrine of Swedenborg was easily made by Coventry Patmore. He considered Swedenborg as the greatest philosopher of his day.

It is apparent that the non-scholastic philosophers whose works influenced Coventry Patmore all owed their position to Plato's idealism practised in varying degrees. Patmore extracted from their teachings only those notions having to do with idealism, rejecting their other tenets. They provided him with a wealth of symbols which he used to advantage in his odes and a collection of philosophical terms which he was fond of displaying in his essays.

One of the favourite expressions used by Patmore in speaking of himself and of the role of poets in general is the term seer. This refers to an individual who sees beyond the material aspect of the beings of the universe, to find the spiritual reality behind each of them. The

term is Swedenborgian in tone, for Swedenborg speaks of visionaries as seers.

Closely related to his notion of seer, is Patmore's concept of contemplation. He defines it as follows:

Contemplation, a faculty rare in all times, is like the photographic plate which finds stars no telescope can discover, by simply setting its passively expectant gaze in certain indicated directions so long and steadily that telescopically invisible bodies become apparent by an accumulation of impression. 24

Patmore's seer is content to remain stationary, gazing at the wonders of the external world, until the beauties of nature fade into the beauty of the Creator. It is this type of description, the result of his lengthy meditations on the things of earth, which is found most frequently in Patmore's verse. He used this notion as a guide in his criticism of other poets, evaluating their works according to the ability of each to contemplate, according to his role as a seer.

Another of Patmore's terms with regard to poetry is real apprehension. The poet must be able to grasp the inner meaning of the things he views, regardless of their

25

Coventry Patmore, Religio Poetae, "Seers, Thinkers and Talkers", p.295.

26

Coventry Patmore, Religio Poetae, "Real Apprehension", p.282.

vastness. In the essay of that title Patmore writes:

....To apprehend, which is to see it in part, or to take hold of it. A thing may be really taken hold of which is much too big for embracing. Real apprehension implies reality in that which it is apprehended. ²⁵

This ability to understand by means of real apprehension the objects which surround mankind, was also according to Patmore a mark of a true poet. He praises those writers in whose work he found this characteristic and condemns those who lack it. In his own work this talent for real apprehension is seen in the largeness of Patmore's outlook on nature and the landscapes he depicts in his poetry. It is visible as well in the prose, where he is able to have an over-all view of the subjects about which he writes.

In his prose work, Patmore gives his own definitions of intellect and imagination:

The truth is that the intellect is the power by which such things are discerned, and the imagination is that by which they are expressed. Sensible things alone can be expressed fully and directly by sensible terms. Symbols and parables, and metaphors--which are parables on a small scale--are the only means of adequately conveying, or rather hinting, super-sensual knowledge. ²⁶

25

Coventry Patmore, Religio Poetae, "Seers, Thinkers and Talkers", p. 295.

26

Coventry Patmore, Religio Poetae, "Real Apprehension", p.282.

Patmore attributed to the intellect or reason the power to grasp concepts immediately. He did not place any great value on reasoning as such. A person who possessed real apprehension had no need to go through long processes of reasoning to reach knowledge. He attained it at once by seeing past the external appearance of objects to reach their essences.

In keeping with his love of big things in nature Patmore had a large, overall view of the moods and fancies of the seasons. The continuity of nature reminded him of the infinity of its Creator. At first this notion frightened him. However, Patmore came to see that if he were to look upon each part of the universe as a small sample of God's beauty, there would be no need to fear. Patmore learned to love and admire the infinite. Often this admiration manifested itself in his contemplation of the sea. He never seemed to tire of watching the waves rolling in to the shore or of gazing at the distant horizon. Patmore's interest in and knowledge of astronomy can be traced in like manner to his searching into the notion of infinity.

Referring to the role of the poet with regard to the expression of infinity, Patmore writes:

The Poet, again, has, like Newton, a special calcula--a doctrine of infinite series, whereby he attains to unveil the infinite and express it in credible terms of the infinite, showing it if not as actually apprehensible, yet as possibly, and even certainly so, to orders of intellect which are probably only a continuation and a development of our own. Of this calculus Dante has abundantly made use, and those passages in his poems which we read with the mos passionate delight and real apprehension are precisely those in which the argument rises from natural experience to the dizziest heights of spiritual probability. ²⁷

It has been said by such critics as Page ²⁸ that Patmore was more interested in a landscaped picture of nature than in any one aspect of the scene before him. He does not content himself with singing of the beauties of one flower, rose, daisy or crocus, as a fitting subject for his verse. Yet flowers do appear quite frequently in Patmore's poetry, and he was by no means unsympathetic to their beauty. In the odes dealing with the four seasons, "St. Valentine's Day", spring, "Wind and Wave", summer, "L'Allegro", autumn, and "Winter", Patmore shows his interest in the various items, which to his mind herald these seasons. Yet, here again,

27
p.221. Coventry Patmore, Religio Poetae, "Religio Poetae",
28
Frederick Page, Patmore, A Study in Poetry, p.14.

Patmore concentrates on providing an overall picture of the season rather than typifying the season by one characteristic flower or shrub. Thus, in "St. Valentine's Day", he looks upon spring as the period of courtship of spring and the earth. He uses the snowdrop, thrush, blackbird, a fisher's skiff, the cries of the choughs, and the children playing along the shore as symbolic of the new birth of the season. In a similar manner, "L'Allegro", pictures autumn with "dreaming field and bossy Autumn wood", the partridge, the evening air, boys busily catching rats, as typical of that time of year.

Even the early poetry shows this tendency to paint a large view of the universe.

The leafy summer-time is young;
 The yearling lambs are strong;
 The sunlight dances merrily;
 The trees are full of song;
 The valley-loving river flows
 Contentedly along.

.....
 No wind is in the willow-tree
 That droops above the bank;
 The water passes quietly
 Beneath the sedges dank;
 Yet the willow trembles in the stream,
 And the dry reeds talk and clank. 29

And from another poem of the same period:

The light has changed. A little since
 You scarcely might descry
 The moon, now gleaming sharp and bright,
 From the small cloud slumbering nigh,
 And, one by one, the timid stars
 Step out into the sky.

The night blackens the pool; but Maud
 Is constant at her post,
 Sunk in a dread, unnatural sleep
 Beneath the skiey host,
 Of drifting mists, thro' which the moon
 Is riding like a ghost. ³⁰

Perhaps the best example of the keen eye with which Coventry Patmore looked at nature is to be found in his "Tamerton Church-Tower". One of the last of the poems written previous to his marriage, it tells of a holiday journey from Tamerton to Plymouth. The territory through which the riders pass is described in minute detail, as is the prevailing weather.

And whilst we rode, quaint sense we read
 Within the changing sky.
 Above us bent a prophet wild,
 Pointing to hidden harm;
 Beyond, a magic woman smiled,
 And wove some wondrous charm;
 Past that, a censor jettied smoke;
 Black convulsions roll'd
 Sunwards, and caught the light and broke
 In crowns of shining gold. ³¹

30

Coventry Patmore, "The Woodman's Daughter", ll.100-114.

31

Coventry Patmore, "Tamerton Church-Tower", ll.95-105.

And again from the same poem:

On, on we toil'd, amidst the blaze
 From Dartmoor's ridges bare;
 Beneath the hush'd and scorching haze,
 And through the twinkling air;
 Along the endless mountain-side,
 That seemed to us to move;
 Past dreary mine-mounths, far and wide;
 Huge dross-heap, wheel and groove;
 Dark towns by disembowell'd hills,
 Where swarthy tribes abode. ³²

"Tamerton Church-Tower" contains magnificent descriptions of two storms, one on land, the other on the sea. One curious fact arises from a study of this poem. There is parallel description of the area through which travellers passed, but the scenes appear to be somewhat different as a result of the attending circumstances.

.....It has now to be said that "Tamerton Church-Tower" must be the most meteorological poem ever written: The two-fold description of every place under opposing aspects makes it a "tour de force", almost ludicrous in the unfailing punctuality of every contradescription, perfectly rendered though each one is and since the sultriness, the storm, the serenity are always also those of the soul, the poem is a piece of symbolism, much more ³³ extended than Patmore ever indulged in again.

Thus far the majority of the passages quoted have been taken from the earliest of Coventry Patmore's poetry. Although it is true that the lengthy descriptions of the verse of 1844 are replaced by fleeting glimpses of nature

³² Coventry Patmore, "Tamerton Church-Tower", ll.167-176

³³ Frederick Page, op.cit., p.49.

in the Angel in the House, it is likewise true that Patmore's interest in the external world continued to be an important part of his person as long as he lived. It provided him with the series of symbols used so effectively in the odes and with the background for "Amelia". The beauty which the poet's pen sketches so lightly, yet so clearly, is only with difficulty separated from the body of the poetry. Referring to this in the Angel in the House, J.L. Garvin writes:

The imagery created with so deft a rapidity of touch is a world of air and light and natural colour so vivid and felicitous that the thought is no more separable from its figure than a flower from its fragrance,. ³⁴

The same comment could be made with equal truth about the odes and later poetry.

The following are typical of the descriptions of the Angel in the House.

.....and, as the moon
On Aetna smiles, she smiled on me.
But, now or then, in cheek or eyes
I saw or fancied, such a glow
As when, in summer-evening skies
Some say "It lightens", some say "No". ³⁵

Her voice singularly heard
Beside me, in her chant, withstood
The roar of voices, like a bird
Sole warbling in a windy wood. ³⁶

³⁴J.L. Garvin, "Coventry Patmore", the Praise of the Odes", in the Fortnightly Review, Vol.61(n.s.), issue of Feb. 1897, p.207-217.

³⁵Coventry Patmore, "Angel in the House", Canto 7, 11.79-84.

³⁶Coventry Patmore, ibid., Canto 12, 11.77-80.

And still from the same poem:

She wearies with an unknown ill
 In sleep she sobs and seems to float,
 A water-lily, all alone
 Within a lonely castle-moat.
 And as the full moon, spectral lies
 Within the crescent's gleaming arms,
 The present shows her headless eyes
 A future dim with vague alarms. ³⁷

The same type of description passages can be found scattered throughout the whole of the Unknown Eros. They become fewer and briefer as the ode sequence progresses but show an equally keen interest in the external world and its beauties. However in this instance the descriptions serve as symbols of the love of man for nature, of his love for his fellowmen and of his love for his Creator.

Ye Clouds that on your endless journey go,
 Ye winds that westward flow,
 Thou heaving Sea
 That heav'st 'twixt her and me,
 Tell her I come. ³⁸

And, at a gasp, no choice or fault of mine,
 Possess'd I am of thee
 Ev'n as a sponge is by a surge of sea! ³⁹

³⁷ Coventry Patmore, ibid, Canto 12, ll.1-3

³⁸ Coventry Patmore, "The Day After To-morrow",

ll.4-5 ³⁹ Coventry Patmore, "Psyche's Discontent",
 ll.63-65.

Patmore's favourite of his poems. "Amelia", is filled with this kind of description.

And there Amelia stood, for fairness shewn
Like a young apple-tree, in flush'd array
Of white and ruddy flow'r, auroral, gay,
With chilly blue maiden branch between. ⁴⁰

And so the Daughter gave,
Soft, moth-like, sweet,
Showy as damask-rose and shy as musk,
Back to her mother, anxious in the dusk. ⁴¹

~~There is no one particular mood of nature in which~~
Coventry Patmore is especially interested. His observations of the calmer aspects of nature compare favourably with those of her more violent moments. All degrees of daylight and darkness, of calm and storm, awaken his poetic eye. However, it is apparent that among all the samples of nature which Patmore used in his poetry, that which recurs most frequently is clouds. His mention of the sea, stars and moon follow in close rank. There is an aspect of infinity in these, his most used subjects. The enormity of the clouds caught his fancy and Patmore was quick to note minute changes in colour and shape. The fascination of the sea with its "unending unrest", was also a symbol of the eternity and infinity which were always in Patmore's thoughts.

⁴⁰ Coventry Patmore, "Amelia", ll.34-37.

⁴¹ Coventry Patmore, "Amelia", ll.173-176.

The concept of nature developed by Coventry Patmore was a compound of many items. The basis for his love of external beauty was found in his belief that all nature was an image of God. Patmore's view of nature was that of a philosopher who looked beyond the tangible universe with the vision of a mystic to see its Creator; that of a seer who contemplated the wonders of the world until they became an integral part of himself; that of a poet whose delicate senses were in close harmony with the external world and its beauty.

CHAPTER THREE

A COMPARISON OF THE PROSODY OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH AND COVENTRY PATMORE.

In order to ascertain the extent to which the use of nature in Patmore's poetry was directly a result of his admiration of the poetry of William Wordsworth, it is necessary to consider the purpose which nature served in the work of each poet. The loveliness of the external world was an end in itself for Wordsworth:

Those incidental charms which first attached
My heart to rural objects, day by day
Grew weaker, and I hasten on to tell
How Nature, intervenient till this time
And secondary, now at length was sought
For her own sake.¹

The chief purpose in his writing was his desire to share the wonderful experience he had enjoyed in his communion with nature. As a result, the poet took great pains to reproduce accurately the scenes which had delighted him. Wordsworth did not intend that the descriptive passages in his work or the shorter nature lyrics should be looked upon as symbolic. He meant the reader to find in himself the same passionate love of the universe which he himself had experienced. The scenes were sketched in minute detail; the actual sites can be found today. Wordsworth

¹William Wordsworth -"The Prelude", Book Two, p.246.

wrote in such a manner that his work can be read without looking for hidden meanings or for a secret message. He intended that the great love which he had for the beauty of the world should become the guide for other searchers for truth and beauty. From nature, Wordsworth had gained not only knowledge but peace and a refuge in time of need. He hoped to share this love of natural beauty with others so that they could profit from his experiences.

However, the motive which inspired the nature poetry of Coventry Patmore was quite different. Despite the fact that the fleeting pictures of the universe which are found in his poetry are accurate in their details, it was not Patmore's desire to cause mankind to worship the external beauty of the world. As a result of his system of thought, Coventry Patmore looked upon the things which inhabited the world as symbols of realities existing in eternity. Hence this teaching influenced the writing of his poetry and especially the descriptive passages which it includes. At no time does Patmore portray the beauty of nature for its own sake. Even the most brief of his pictures of nature is intended to raise the mind of his readers to the spiritual level. Patmore looked upon the union of nature and spirit of the earth as symbolic of the union of man

and woman in marriage and ultimately of the union of the soul with God in Heaven.

Is't the waked Earth now to yon purpling cope
 Uttering first-love's first cry,
 Vainly renouncing, with a Seraph's sigh,
 Love's natural hope?
 Fair-meaning Earth, foredoom'd to perjury!
 Behold, all amorous May,
 With roses heap'd upon her² laughing brows,
 Avoids thee of thy vows!

Consequently, although descriptive passages abound in all his poetry, Patmore cannot be regarded as a "nature for the sake of nature" poet. Many of Patmore's poems could be thought of as straight nature lyrics, if they were removed from their context and judged without a knowledge of the philosophy of nature which he held. Coventry Patmore regarded nature as symbolic of the spiritual realm and of the love of God for the human soul. Even the most Wordsworthian of the poems takes on a new and deeper meaning when its symbolism has been explored and the poet's real meaning discovered.

In writing of the use which Coventry Patmore made of nature in his work, J. C. Reid states:

2

Coventry Patmore, "St. Valentine's Day", ll. 39-46.

That sacramental view of Nature which informs the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge also informs that of Patmore, part of whose originality lay in transferring the sacramental sense and insights of Wordsworth to the married state. As Wordsworth had found occasions of joy in external nature which poets had not recorded before, so Patmore found similar occasions in marriage. For Wordsworth since Nature was an inexhaustible revelation of beauty and wisdom, it must be a reflection of God Himself; for Patmore, the natural relationship of marriage is a source of so much delight that it must be a fore-taste, as well as a symbol, of the union of the soul with God.³

However, he does not deny the fact that the poetry of William Wordsworth has a profound influence on Patmore's poetry. Mr. Reid says:

The transcendental experience of Nature plays a greater part in Patmore's verse than is realized by those who look on him only as the poet of wedded love. Apart from the exquisite symbolizing of Nature in the four 'seasonal' odes, and the sense of creation's glories elsewhere in the Unknown Eros, The Angel in the House is full of sensitive response to the inner heart of Nature.. Patmore is, in simple fact, one of the most purely Wordsworthian of Victorian poets. Not only is his 'innocent sensuality' like that of Wordsworth, however, but verbal reminiscences of the great Romantic poet are scattered through The Angel in the House; for instance in the preludes "The Rainbow" and "Love and Duty".⁴

3

J.C. Reid, The Mind and Art of Coventry Patmore, London, Routledge, 1957, v-358p., p.58

4

J.C. Reid, ibid, p. 57.

When William Wordsworth spoke of nature in his poetry, he intended that his readers should be filled with awe at the beauty presented to them. The deeper this sense of wonder should be, the greater would be the hope that they would come eventually to find the work of God's hand in the external world as he had done. For this reason Wordsworth was extremely accurate in his pictures of the world about him. His eagerness made his descriptions sharp and clear, his reactions joyous. In contrast, Coventry Patmore saw in nature a series of steps depicting the love of the Creator for the world he had created. Just as there were varying degrees of life on earth, so Patmore saw that there were various steps symbolising the love of God for man. The most perfect of these symbols he thought to be the state of marriage. However, even here Patmore was able to extend the analogy further by looking upon the union of nature and the universe as a symbol of marriage. Thus to give a firm basis for this premise, Patmore devoted a portion of his poetry to the description of natural beauty with a view to showing that the relationship between nature and the earth is similar in some of its aspects to that of marriage. Just as Wordsworth was careful to represent the beauties of the world in all their glory, so too Patmore succeeded in picturing the world about him. He hoped that his readers would see

beyond the scenes before them to the eternal love of God for His world and the union of the human soul with God in Heaven.

Patmore's approach to his subject was typically Wordsworthian, both in his manner of expression and in his accuracy of detail. Frederick Page comments in this regard:

And even it is Alice Meynell who says, "Essentially Patmore had but one subject -human love as a mystery" the scrupulous reader will substitute the word "life" for her word "love". Patmore's subject was that of Wordsworth and Dante, and Wordsworth's subject was not landscape; nor Dante's Beatrice; nor was Patmore's marriage. Patmore's one essential subject was the soul with whatever is necessary to it -- that is, in its most general and intimate sense; in his own phrase, the great society of men, of Angels and God.⁵

One specific passion ruled the writings of each of these poets. In the case of William Wordsworth nature provided the impetus; in that of Coventry Patmore love provided the impetus. Hence Wordsworth expressed the necessity of nature to him in his hours of loneliness and of rest; the peace and solace he obtained from the remembrance of scenes which he had visited previously.

5

Frederick Page, Patmore, A Study in Poetry, p.15-16.

These beauteous forms,
 Through a long absence, have not been to me
 As in a landscape to a blind man's eye;
 But oft, in lonely rooms, and mid the din
 Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
 In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
 Felt in the blood and felt along the heart;
 And passing even in my purest mind,
 With tranquil restoration.

In one of the sonnets published in his Poems of 1844 Coventry Patmore admits the necessity of love in his life:

At nine years old I was Love's willing Page:
 Poets love earlier than other men
 And would love later, but for the prodigal pen. ⁷

The basic notions which William Wordsworth and Coventry Patmore held concerning the art of poetry were strikingly similar. Writing in the "Preface" to Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth gives his own definition of poetry-- "Poetry is the image of man and nature" and further on "For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings".⁸ For Wordsworth, man was a being whose mind was formed by constant contact with nature, and who gained his knowledge of the universe by a series of sensations which were associated with a set of ideas already in existence in the mind. In this light his "image of man and nature" assume great importance. Joseph Warren Beach

⁶William Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey", ll.22-30.

⁷Coventry Patmore, autobiographical sonnet, quoted by Frederick Page in his Patmore, A Study in Poetry, p.40

⁸William Wordsworth, "Preface" to Lyrical Ballads. p. 851.

speaks of Wordsworth's associationism as follows:

More germane to our present subject is Wordsworth's account in "Tintern Abbey" of how far, starting with the materials furnished by the senses, we are carried by our thought and affections, through association of ideas. This poem illustrates particularly well the kind of transformation the psychological doctrine of Hartley undergoes under the wand of poetic imagination. Hartley as a psychologist, is considering the entire range of sensations involved in our human experience as material out of which our ideas and sentiments are fabricated, whereas Wordsworth, poet-like, is chiefly concerned with the "beauteous forms" of nature as observed our-of doors in the country. But this nature was the main source of sensations for the boy Wordsworth, and these "beauteous forms" are conceived of in terms of the physical sensations which they provoke, and which lead by due process of association to the operations of the "purer mind".

The essence of good poetry, according to Wordsworth, was, in part, the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings". To one who looked upon the universe as Wordsworth did, strong sensations, the result of great passion, were the natural outcome of his contact with the beauteous forms of the world. The introductions to many of his poems bear witness to their having been written only after his return home. However, at times the recollections of the beauty that he had seen years previously had much the same effect as was produced by recently viewed scenes. Wordsworth's principle in this regard was that to write good poetry the poet must have

⁹ Joseph Warren Beach, The Concept of Nature in Nineteenth Century English Poetry, p. 139.

experienced great passion, so great in fact that it was the overflow of passion which formed the basis of the poem.

Coventry Patmore also developed a definition of poetry:

Poetry is essentially catholic and affirmative, dealing only with the permanent facts of nature and humanity, and interested in the events and contraversies of its own time only so far as they evolve manifestly abiding fruits. ¹⁰

The concept of poetry as developed by Coventry Patmore was broader in its scope than that of William Wordsworth. Not all that is found in nature and in man is fit material for the poet. Only those things which form a permanent part of nature and of man's nature were considered fit suitable subjects for poetry. Patmore's poetry illustrates this outlook. He showed a fondness for things which were enduring. Those processes of nature which continued from year to year, the cycle of the seasons, the pattern of the heavens, the growth of vegetation were worthy of study and became an integral part of his writing. Man's body with its senses and his soul with its faculties were well-suited for the work of the poet. However, Patmore did not consider the individual man as a fitting topic for poetry. It is man in the broad sense that is found in his work. Patmore adhered to this

10

Coventry Patmore, Principle in Art, "The Poetry of Negation", p.140.

theory with the one exception of the political poetry denouncing Disraeli and later on, Gladstone. Since it was the essence of both man and the universe which he inhabited which were to provide the material for poetry, it followed that the poet would not be expected to pass more than a passing glance at the happenings of the day. In like manner he would not be censured should he see fit to overlook the majority of world events despite their momentary interest and importance in the eyes of the world.

Both William Wordsworth and Coventry Patmore agreed that the external world and man were the most suitable topics for poetry. Wordsworth's view was narrower since he intended to mirror specific scenes and particular individuals; whereas Patmore tended to stress the common denominator in both man and nature rather than display an interest in particular persons. Fundamentally the concept was the same, a shift of emphasis making the distinction between the point of view of each poet.

Regarding the function to be performed by a poet, both William Wordsworth and Coventry Patmore gave clear definitions. Wordsworth wrote:

What then does the poet? He considers man and the objects which surround him as acting and re-acting upon each other, so as to produce an infinite complexity of pain and pleasure; he considers man in his own nature and his ordinary life as contemplating this with a certain quantity of immediate knowledge, with certain convictions, intuitions and deductions, which from habit acquire the habits of intuitions; he considers him as looking upon this complex scene of ideas and sensations, and finding everywhere objects that immediately excite in him sympathies which from the necessities of his nature are accompanied by an overbalance of enjoyment. ¹¹

Thus the chief duty of the poet was to observe the universe about him, to meditate on its relation to himself and to mankind in general, and to reproduce the resulting sensations in the form of poetry. The doctrine of associationism is clearly seen in the "acting and re-acting upon each other so as to produce an infinite complexity of pain and pleasure". The continual clash of opposing ideas gave birth to knowledge. The association of ideas thus gained, led to a true evaluation of the world about him. The poet's role did not include the interpretation of the significance of the things which roused his passions. He must strive to reproduce them accurately in order to excite in others the sensation which he experienced on perceiving them. Clearly too, only those objects which produced a favourable impression, only those which proved pleasing to

11

William Wordsworth, "Preface" to Lyrical Ballads, p.855.

the poet were to be used. This was in keeping with Wordsworth's policy of dealing with pleasant aspects of and with experiences which were capable of giving joy to his readers.

Coventry Patmore in writing of the poet's function stated:

The Poet, again, is not more singular for the delicacy of his spiritual insight which enables him to see celestial beauty and substantial reality where all is blank to most others, than for the surprising range and alertness of vision, whereby he detects, in external nature, those likenesses and echoes by which spiritual realities can alone be rendered credible and more or less apparent, or subject to real apprehension, in persons of inferior perceptive powers. ¹²

The influence of Swedenborg's philosophy can be seen in Patmore's definition. He looked upon the natural world as a means whereby knowledge of spiritual truths could be expressed. Indeed, it seemed at times that he believed that this was the sole means of gaining such learning. The poet must note the symbols of the spiritual realm and use them to guide less endowed men to a realization of the purpose of the external world. They could be led to see the reality of the loveliness of the universe and to seek after its spiritual counterpart. Eventually they might come to a knowledge of the part intended for nature

12

Coventry Patmore, Religio Poetae, "Religio Poetae", p.221.

in the Divine Plan. In every instance Patmore looked upon the world as real, but as having importance only insofar as its symbolic purpose was borne in mind. The interpretation of what he saw, was therefore, an essential part of the function of a poet.

And here let it be said that, so far are the originators and doctors of the great religions of the world and its greatest poets from having adopted an unnatural method of teaching, that it is the very method of Nature, whose book, from beginning to end, is nothing but a series of symbols, enigmas, parables and rites, only to be interpreted by the discerning intellect of man, and labouriously employed. 13

Since nature herself employed a system of symbols in her teaching of mankind, Patmore looked upon his use of symbolic language as necessary to his art.

The natural beauty which gave inspiration to both William Wordsworth and Coventry Patmore was the same. For Wordsworth the world's beauty was meant to help mankind to become better, to provide a moral guide, to give the mind and heart needed refreshment. The strong impressions which nature had made upon his mind as a child, remained with Wordsworth.

Ye Presences of Nature in the sky
 And on the earth! Ye Visions of the hills!
 And Souls of lonely places! Can I think
 A vulgar hope was yours when ye employed
 Such ministry, when ye, through many years
 Haunting me thus among my boyish sports,
 On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills,
 Impressed, upon all forms, the characters
 Of danger or desire; and thus did make
 The surface of the universal earth,
 With triumph and delight, with hope and fear,
 Work like a sea? ¹⁴

Both "The Tables Turned" and "Expostulation and Reply" gave Wordsworth's doctrine concerning the ability of nature to form the mind of man. All of his poetry reflected the joy and peace which Wordsworth found in the company of natural beauty.

In contrast, Coventry Patmore, steeped in the philosophic teachings of Swedenborg, regarded nature as a ladder whose successive rungs would lead to God. As he contemplated the landscape about him, Patmore's mind was raised from the sight of the beauty of the natural realm, to that of the spiritual realm of which these creatures were symbols. Realizing the beauty of the scenes about him, he stood in awe of the still greater beauty of the creatures of the spiritual world and of its Creator.

The contemplative role of the poet was stressed by William Wordsworth and Coventry Patmore. In order to gain an intimate knowledge of the universe, the poet

¹⁴ William Wordsworth, The Prelude, Book One, p. 241.

according to Wordsworth, must spend long hours in silent communion with nature and still longer hours pondering the things which he has seen. Patmore's comparison of this poetic duty to the photographic plate which through long periods of exposure discovers wonders hidden from the human eye, is most apt.

Contemplation, a faculty rare in all times, is like the photographic plate which finds stars no telescope can discover, by simply setting its passively expectant gaze in a certain indicated direction so long and steadily that telescopically invisible bodies become apparent by an accumulation of impression. ¹⁵

Patmore's poet must be a seer, not only in the sense that he must look upon the external world with the gaze of a visionary mystic, but also in order that he might consider the beauty of the universe and permit it to become a part of himself. There is complete agreement between Wordsworth and Patmore concerning the importance of this meditative aspect of the writing of poetry. For Wordsworth it produced the best of his nature poetry; for Patmore it led to a spiritual philosophy of nature.

Again the Poet always treats spiritual realities as the concrete and very credible things they truly are. He has no slipshod notions about the immeasurable and infinite. ¹⁶

¹⁵ Coventry Patmore, Religio Poetae, "Real Apprehension", p.284-285.

¹⁶ Coventry Patmore, op.cit., "Religio Poetae", p.222.

Patmore's poet was as comfortable in the world of the spirit as he was among the realities of everyday life.

The language which was to be used in the composition of poetry posed a problem which both Wordsworth and Patmore attempted to solve. Wordsworth wrote:

The language of such poetry as is here recommended is, as far as possible, a selection of the language really spoken by men; that this selection, wherever it is made with true taste and feeling will of itself form a distinction far greater than would at first be imagined, and will entirely separate the composition from the vulgarity and meanness of ordinary life; and, if metre be superadded thereto, I believe that a dissimilitude will be produced altogether sufficient for the gratification of a rational mind. ¹⁷

Thus according to the older poet the language of poetry should in most cases be chosen from the ordinary spoken language of average men. However, in order to remove all traces of its origin, the poet should make a careful selection of words and phrases. Moreover, the skillful use of metre would tend to make this everyday language more acceptable to those who were unfamiliar with its use in this respect. The very repetition of words found in average conversations would make the poetry more readily accepted by those who in other circumstances would not come into contact with poetry.

17

William Wordsworth, "Preface", to Lyrical Ballads, p. 853.

Patmore, too, pondered the language problem. He wrote concerning the poet's choice of words:

The best poet is not he whose verses are the most scannible and whose phraseology is the commonest in its material and most direct in its arrangement; but rather he whose language combines the greatest imaginative accuracy with the most elaborate and sensible metrical organisation, and who, in his verse, preserves everywhere the living sense of metre, not so much by unvarying obedience to, as by innumerable small departures from its modulus. 18

In the final instance Patmore gave equal emphasis to language and metre. No matter how common the language it failed its purpose if it did not excite the imagination and please the ear.

It is evident that William Wordsworth and Coventry Patmore each placed a slightly different emphasis on the importance of metre. For Wordsworth, the language of the common people was the main thing; metre was the means of raising this language into the realm of poetry. It was, therefore, of secondary importance, a tool in the hands of the poet who could use it to suit his purpose. Patmore, on the other hand, tended to place more value on the use of metre than on the choice of vocabulary. Although he attempted to use ordinary words in his writing, Patmore was more at ease in the studied language of a scholar. More of his poetic experimentation was spent in searching for a

metrical form sufficiently pliable to suit his needs in contact with everyday folk to record their use of the mother tongue. Patmore's ode sequence The Unknown Eros was the result of his work in language and metre; Wordsworth's Lyrical Ballads were the result of his work in the language of the ordinary man.

The relationship between William Wordsworth and Coventry Patmore went much farther than a similarity of outlook on the key points of poetic theory. The deep love of nature which they shared as well as a predisposition to contemplation bound them closely together. Isolated passages of Patmore's poetry, chosen at random reveal the kinship of the two poets. Patmore's

No passion but a virtue 'tis. 19

is reminiscent of Wordsworth's

How Nature by extrinsic passion first
Peopled the mind with forms sublime and fair,
And made me love them. 20

In like manner Patmore's

In idle moods you seem to see
A noble spirit in a hill
A human touch about a tree. 21

19
Coventry Patmore, Angel in the House, Canto 3,
Prelude, ll.44

20
William Wordsworth, The Prelude, Book 1. p.242.

21
Coventry Patmore, Angel in the House, Canto 2,
Prelude, ll.91-93.

and his

'Tis this, said I, our senses mar
 Ev'n so, sweet Nature's face
 Unless by love revived they are
 Or lit by heavenly grace. ²²

seem to echo Wordsworth's thought as set forth in his

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;
 Our meddling intellect
 Misshapes the beauteous forms of things:-
 We murder to dissect. ²³

Typical of the longer descriptive passages which are scattered throughout Patmore's poetry is the following taken from the Odes:

Often, in sheltering brakes,
 As one from rest disturb'd in the first hour,
 Primrose or violet bewilder'd wakes,
 And deems 'tis time to flower;
 Though not a whisper of her voice he hear,
 The buried owl does know
 The signals of the year,
 And hails far summer with his lifted spear. ²⁴

The concept of prosody shared by William Wordsworth and Coventry Patmore differed in minor details. William Wordsworth pointed out the beauty, loveliness and attractiveness of the external world in order that others should come to admire the craftsmanship of its Creator. The couching of his message in the language of the common folk

²²

Coventry Patmore, "Tamerton Church-Tower", 11.27-82.

²³

William Wordsworth, "The Tables Turned", 11.25-28.

²⁴

Coventry Patmore, The Unknown Eros, "Winter", 11.24-31.

enabled more persons to understand it. The poetry of Coventry Patmore served to describe nature with the intention of showing that nature existed for the sole purpose of providing mankind with a series of symbols through which he could learn of the love of the Creator for His creatures.

Since both poets looked upon nature with the intense vision of contemplation, since both were attempting to depict the scenes before them, it is not surprising that some of William Wordsworth's poetry seemed to be in a sense Patmorean, and that in like manner some of Coventry Patmore's poetry seemed like an echo of the work of Wordsworth. They shared a spiritual kinship in the cult of nature.

However, in order to determine the actual role taken by nature in Patmore's poetry it is necessary to examine it in the light of his theory of prosody and of his philosophy of nature. The following chapter will study the better known nature odes and "Amelia" for this purpose.

CHAPTER FOUR

A STUDY OF NATURE IN THE ODES OF COVENTRY PATMORE.

The poetry of Coventry Patmore as published in his Collected Works, contains many examples of his nature poetry. The early poems were more picturesque in their settings and in their long descriptive passages than were the poems of Patmore's mature years. After his experimentation with "The River", "The Woodsman's Daughter" and "Tamerton Church-Tower", Patmore used natural scenery with a sparing hand, but his accuracy as a poetic artist remained sure and true. Among the latter part of his work there is a group of odes which rivals his earliest poetry in its portrayal of nature. Of the twenty-four odes which comprise the first book of The Unknown Eros, the first three are specifically nature odes, while the remainder of the series treat of the role played by nature in leading man to God. These poems, together with "L'Allegro" which is now grouped with Patmore's "other odes", form a cycle of the seasons, typifying the stages of natural love. As the series progresses, the poet passes from natural love to Divine Love and treats of the sorrows and sacrifices which are inseparable from life. Of necessity the references to nature become fewer. The second book continues the theme of the contemplation of God by the soul. Even among the most serious of Patmore's work, there are fleeting glimpses

of nature. This is truly Patmore's domain, where his love of nature, his love of love and his love of God are blended to form a unique whole. Since the subject matter of the second book of The Unknown Eros was not suited to the taste of the reading public, Coventry Patmore lost his position of popular poet.

The introductory odes of the sequence serve the purpose of illustrating the relationship of man and nature as symbolic of Divine Love. Dealing with each season in turn, Patmore progresses from mere natural love of the universe to an understanding of the reality of the part which nature plays in leading man to God. "Saint Valentine's Day", (spring), "Wind and Wave", (summer), "L'Allegro", (autumn), and "Winter", are the best examples of straight nature poetry to be found in Patmore's work. One other ode, "Amelia", can be grouped with these nature poems as it combines Patmore's description of nature and his portrayal of human love.

The first of the odes in the order of time is "Saint Valentine's Day", Patmore's tribute to spring. The keynote of the poem is the wonder of the returning beauty of the world. Writing elsewhere of this season Patmore stated:

I think I never remember such lovely "Valentine's Day" weather. The birds are as happy and as noisy as a school of little children let loose. The garden, which no one cares for at this season, is more touchingly lovely than at any other season. The damp, fresh-turned mould swells with life. Solitary patches of crocuses, in the brown borders, blaze joyfully in the sun; and fifty other lovely little lives begin to show - the lovelier because they require to be looked for. ¹

This undated quotation, written prior to the ode dealing with the same subject, may have provided the germ for its inspiration.

It was not any specific spring which gave the poet his subject.

It was the recurring wonder of the return of new life to the seemingly dead world, observed and pondered over during series of springs which provided the picture so lovingly painted in the poem.

Coventry Patmore realized the need for communion with nature which was part of his make-up.

The more lofty, living, and spiritual the intellect and character become, the more is the need perceived for the sap of life which can be sucked only from the inscrutable and, to the wholly rational mind, repulsive ultimates of nature and instinct. ²

This outlook on the continuity of nature was not solely Patmore's as is seen by the following statement of his friend Gerard Manley Hopkins.

¹
Basil Champneys, The Memoirs and Correspondence of Coventry Patmore, Vol.2, p. 109.

²
Coventry Patmore, Principle in Art, "Distinction", p.228.

The busy working of nature wholly independent of the earth and seeming to go on in a strain of time not reckoned by our reckoning of days and years, but simpler and as if correcting the preoccupation of the world by being preoccupied with and appealing to and dated to the day of judgment, was like a new witness to God and filled me with delightful fear. ³

In his address to spring, Coventry Patmore strikes this note immediately.

O, quick praevernal Power
 That signall'st punctual through the sleepy mould
 The Snowdrop's time to flower,
 Fair as the rash oath of virginity
 Which is first-love's first cry;
 O Baby Spring,
 That flutter'st sudden, 'neath the breast of Earth
 Whence is the peaceful poignancy,
 The joy contrite,
 Sadder than sorrow, sweeter than delight,
 That burthens now the breath of everything,
 Though each one sighs as if to each alone
 The cherish'd pang were known. ⁴

Nature's awakening to the new period of growth is slow and languid. Although all the creatures of the world are longing for the arrival of the season, it is not until the appearance of the snowdrop that they realise that all is well. Then all nature unites to celebrate the espousals of Earth and Spring. What better day could be chosen for so solemn an event than Saint Valentine's Day?

³ N. Wegand, The Immortal Diamond, Sheed and Ward, 1949, ix-451; "Nature and the Supernatural", p.228.

⁴ Coventry Patmore, The Unknown Eros, "Saint Valentine's Day", ll.6-19.

The newly arrived springtime was addressed in a typically pantheistic form of address:

O, quick, praeernal Power.

Patmore's delight in pondering the beauty of the earth is evident throughout the ode. The accuracy of description, the interest in the smallest signs of beauty, and the welcome of spring are indicative of the influence of Wordsworth upon Patmore's thought and style. However, the symbol of love and the espousals of earth with the springtime are Patmore's own view of the event. The symbol of love dominates the whole ode sequence. Here the poet pictures a very reluctant earth shyly pledging herself to an overly eager nature. Although all creatures rejoice, earth remains silent, timid, even hesitant about the union.

Behold, all-amorous May
With roses heap'd upon her laughing brows,
Avoids thee of thy vows! ⁵

There is an underlying sense of pain before the season actually begins.

Isn't the waked Earth, now to yon purpling cope
Uttering first love's first cry
Vainly renouncing with a Seraph's sigh,
Love's natural hope? ⁶

This ode as well as "L'Allegro", were according to Basil Champneys, the result of Patmore's residence at

⁵ Coventry Patmore, "St. Valentine's Day", ll.44-46.

⁶ Coventry Patmore, "St. Valentine's Day", ll.39-42.

Heron's Ghyll, the country estate where Patmore spent so much time and energy.

The Heron's Ghyll period, as we know, laid the foundation of the Odes, the subjects of which were for the most part inspired by events of an earlier date. There are indeed two of them which may be taken to embody ideas drawn mainly if not exclusively, from this section of his life: "L'Allegro" is a picture of the Heron's Ghyll days, rather generalized than idealized, and "St. Valentine's Day" is no doubt founded on the close observation of nature which country life developed, and for which he never had elsewhere quite the same advantages, at any rate in his later days.⁷

The union of earth and nature is pictured in "Wind and Wave", an ode of the summer sea. The main symbol of the ode is the sea, now calm and unperturbed as it goes on its way, now stirred to waves which beat upon the shore. The description of the arrival of the waters on the beach is typically Patmorean in its attention to detail.

Until the vanguard billows feel
 The agitating shallows, and divine the goal,
 And to foam roll,
 And spread and stray,
 And traverse wildly, like delighted hands,
 The fair and fleckless sands;
 And so the whole
 Unfathomable and immense
 Triumphant tide comes at the last to reach
 And burst in wind-kiss'd splendours on the deaf'ning
 beach,
 Where forms of children in first innocence
 Laugh and fling pebbles on the rainbow'd crest
 Of its untired unrest.⁸

⁷ Basil Champneys, *op.cit.*, Vol.1. p.361
⁸ Coventry Patmore, "Wind and Wave", ll.25-36.

The ode benefits from Coventry Patmore's deep interest in the ocean. He has caught accurately the picture of the returning tide, complete to the joy of the little children playing amid its spray. Beneath the symbolism lies his teaching concerning human love and its relationship to Divine Love. Patmore looked upon the calmness of the sea as symbolic of the serenity of the early days of love and marriage. The stirring of the waters represented the trials and troubles which are a necessary part of human existence.

But, in a while,
 The immeasurable smile
 Is broke by fresher airs to flashes blent
 With darkling discontent.

However, these difficulties themselves lead to eventual pleasure, for Patmore continues:

And all the subtle zephyr hurries gay,
 And all the heaving ocean heaves one way,
 T'ward the void sky-line and an unguess'd weal. 10

The regained joy of the sea is found in the abandon with which it flings itself upon the beach. In like manner the difficulties of life will lead eventually to pleasure. This idea that the evil or perhaps unpleasant things in life lead finally to good, is found also in Wordsworth's philosophic view of the universe, for he regarded the pain

⁹ Coventry Patmore, "Wind and Wave", ll.18-21.

¹⁰ Coventry Patmore, "Wind and Wave", ll.22-24.

inflicted by nature as a promise of a greater good to follow. Here, the disturbance of the mirror-like smoothness of the waters causes the beauty of the waves splashing on the shore.

The satisfaction of a year's work well done is the theme of "L'Allegro". The work of the harvesters is clearly portrayed as is their sense of pride at the result of their labours. Champneys suggests that the ode is a direct result of an incident which took place on Patmore's estate.¹¹ In any case, the picture of the men at work threshing is sharp in its details both of the motions of the workers and of the satisfaction they feel when the harvest is stored in the granary. Patmore's own attitude toward autumn is also presented:

For, though it be not May,
Sure, few delights of Spring excel
The beauty of this mild September day! ¹²

Despite this statement, the poet spends the greater portion of the poem in considering the part which certitude should play in men's life. These scenes which are singled out, are typical of Patmore's view of nature.

Now, careless, let us stray or stop
To see the partridge from the covey drop,
Or while the evening air's like yellow wine,
From the pure stream take out
The playful trout,
That jerks with rasping check the struggled line.¹³

¹¹ Basil Champneys, *op.cit.*, Vol.1, p.235.
¹² Coventry Patmore, "L'Allegro", ll.18-20
¹³ Coventry Patmore, *ibid*, ll.50-55.

Later he pauses to watch the threshers at work and notices in addition to the harvesters:

And dogs and boys with sticks
Wait murderous, for the rats that leave the ricks.¹⁴

There is a mood of contentment lingering over the ode, for both man and nature have combined their forces to produce the harvest. The ode does not fit easily into the cycle of nature odes because of the comments of the poet concerning certitude. This in part accounts for its present position among the "other" odes.

Coventry Patmore took particular delight in studying the winter landscape, for this was his favourite season. For him the winter scenery was symbolic of the peace and contentment which were attained after many years of married life. He pictured the couple waiting peacefully for the joys of eternity. Nature, here, presents a picture of joy and security, a result of the knowledge that the bulbs and seedlings are nestled safely beneath the earth.

14

Coventry Patmore, "L'Allegro", ll.66-67.

And the dim cloud that does the world enfold
 Hath less the characters of dark and cold
 Than warmth and light asleep,
 And correspondent breathing seems to keep
 With infant harvest, breathing soft below
 Its eider coverlet of snow. 15

The whole universe seems to be standing ready for the first signs of returning spring; so eager in its waiting that it occasionally mistakes the winter sunshine for the longed-for season.

On every chance-mild day
 That visits the moist shaw,
 The honeysuckle, 'sdaining to be crost
 In urgency of sweet life by sleet or frost,
 'Voids the time's law
 With still increase
 Of leaflet new, and little, wandering spray. 16

The poet notes the changes in the face of nature, the green of the bulbs as they push their way to the sun, the renewed vigour of the robins' song, the stirring of the "ghostly chrysalis". However, it is the contented smile of winter which causes him to pause and contemplate.

But sweeter yet than dream or song of Summer or Spring
 Are Winter's sometime smiles, that seem to well
 From infancy ineffable;
 Her wandering, langourous gaze,
 So unfamiliar, so without amaze,
 On the elemental, chill adversity,
 The uncomprehended rudeness; and her sigh
 And solemn, gathering tear,
 And look of exile from some great repose, the sphere
 Of ether, moved by ether only, or
 By something still more tranquil. 17

15 Coventry Patmore, "Winter", 11.7-12.

16 Coventry Patmore, "Winter", 11.17-23.

17 Coventry Patmore, ibid, 11.46-57.

The delicacy with which Coventry Patmore depicted the seasons, in turn, was that of one who saw in the beauty of the universe a sacramental value placed there by the touch of its Creator. In his essays he spoke of this poetic talent:

The poet's eye glances from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven; and his faculty of discerning likeness in difference enables him to express the unknown in terms of the known, so as to confer upon the former a sensible credibility, and to give the latter a truly sacramental dignity. ¹⁸

In regard to Coventry Patmore's attitude toward nature J. C. Reid wrote:

More important.....is the fact that Patmore's poetry shows a Herrick-like instinctive joy in Nature and sheer delight in the identification of aspects of the human, natural and divine worlds. Patmore could not help but recognize, as few of his contemporaries did, the sacramental view of Nature expressed in Herrick's lyrics, and the vast amount of learning distilled in them. ¹⁹

It is this ability to see beyond the appearance of the universe to discern the hidden beauty placed there by its Creator that lifts Patmore's poetry above the level of mere nature poetry. His studies of nature are reverent as though he were pondering something sacred; his touch is light and gentle as though he were handling things too

¹⁸ Coventry Patmore, Religio Poetae, "Religio Poetae", p. 306.

¹⁹ J. C. Reid, The Mind and Art of Coventry Patmore. p. 253.

sacred to be touched carelessly. This mark of identification is found in all Patmore's sketches of natural beauty.

Although the outstanding example of Patmore's use of nature are found in the seasonal odes, a considerable number of references are scattered throughout the latter part of his writings. Just as his early poetry showed an interest in the sea, stars and external nature, so here the same symbols are used. Of the sea he wrote:

Perchance she droops within the hollow gulf
Which the great wave of coming pleasure draws,
Not guessing the glad cause!
Ye Clouds that on your endless journey go,
Ye Winds that westward flow,
Thou heaving Sea
That heav'st 'twixt her and me,
Tell her I come,
Then only sigh your pleasure, and be dumb.²⁰

The symbol of the sea recurs again:

Here, in this little Bay,
Full of tumultuous life and great repose,
Where, twice a day,
The purposeless glad ocean comes and goes,
Under high cliffs and far from the huge town,
I sit re down.²¹

Speaking of the purposes filled by nature symbolism, and explaining its continued appearance in the later odes, J.C. Reid states:

20

Coventry Patmore, "Day After Tomorrow", ll.1-7.

21

Coventry Patmore, "Magna est Veritas", ll. 1-6.

Yet, although there are Nature references in plenty in the poems, and many charming passages of pure description, it is as a source of analogies for the nuptial relationship or for the personality of the beloved that Nature chiefly serves him. ²²

The ode "Legem tuam Dilexi" marks the end of the series of odes devoted to nature as a symbol of love. Thereafter Coventry Patmore passes on to his main theme the love of man for woman as symbolic of the love of the soul for God. However, the habits of a lifetime's writing were not easily cast aside, and on certain occasions Patmore slips back almost unconsciously into the nature symbols of the earlier poems. As found in the second book of the Unknown Eros, these references are swift, and fleeting.

Insertion of descriptive passages would cause the odes to become disjointed. Such lines as the following show that Patmore's love of nature remained though for the most part unseen.

What is the chief news of the Night?
Lo, iron and salt, heat, weight and light,
In every star that drifts in the great breeze!
And these
Mean Man. ²³

22

J.C. Reid, The Mind and Art of Coventry Patmore,
p. 309.

23

Coventry Patmore, "Legem tuam Dilexi", 11.47-51.

And again:

The magnet calls the steel;
 Answers the iron to the magnet's breath;
 What do they feel
 But death!
 The clouds of summer skies kiss in flame and rain,
 And are not found again;
 But the heavens themselves eternal are with fire
 Of unapproached desire
 By the aching heart of Love, which cannot rest,
 In blissfullest pathos so indeed possess'd. ²⁴

In some instances the momentary glimpse of nature provided in the similes gives a respite from the mystical theme, thus permitting the meaning to be clarified. Lines such as:

Possess'd I am with thee
 Ev'n as a sponge is by a surge of the sea. ²⁵

cannot be regarded as nature poetry. They demonstrate the fact that nature had become so much a part of Patmore's way of thinking and writing that he could not exclude it from his greatest poetry.

"Amelia", the last of Coventry Patmore's poetry according to date of composition and his favourite of all his work, benefited from the experimentation which he had done during the writing of the odes. All the love of nature of the early poetry is found here in a sublimated form. Patmore, writing an idyll of nature - woman - love was at his best. "Amelia" is a deceptively simple poem, telling of a walk to a country graveyard. It is the apt

11.29-38²⁴ Coventry Patmore, "Deliciae Sapientiae de Amore",
²⁵ Coventry Patmore, "Psyche's Discontent, 11.62-63

descriptions of the scene and the accurate portrayal of Amelia's reaction which gave the poem its value.

And so we went alone
 By walls o'er which the lilac's numerous plume
 Shook down perfume;
 Trim plots close blown
 With daisies, in conspicuous myriads seen,
 Ungross's each one
 With single ardour for her spouse, the sun; 26

The setting of the poem is the seaside town where the maiden resides. It is typical of Patmore that the poem opens with a reference to the sea.

There, where the little, bright, sun-breathing town,
 That show'd me first her beauty and the sea,
 Gathers its skirts against the gorse-lit down
 And scatters gardens o'er the southern lea,
 Abides this Maid. 27

The description of the natural beauty along the walk is proof of the accuracy of Patmore's descriptions. It is a very English scene, with springtime at its height.

Meadows of fervid green,
 With sometime sudden prospect of untold
 Cowslips, like chance-found gold;
 And broadcast buttercups at joyful gaze,
 Rending the air with praise,
 Like the six-hundred-thousand-voiced shout
 Of Jacob camp'd in Midian put to rout. 28

²⁶ Coventry Patmore, "Amelia", ll.40-46.

²⁷ Coventry Patmore, "Amelia", ll.5-9.

²⁸ Coventry Patmore, "Amelia", ll.50-56.

The response of Amelia to the poet's affection is carefully sketched:

Now I arose, and raised her to her feet,
 My best Amelia, fresh-born from a kiss,
 Roth-like, full-blown in birtadew shuddering sweet,
 With great, kind eyes, in whose brown shade
 Bright Venus and her baby play'd! 29

"Amelia" marks the close of Patmore's poetical career. It is apparent that the nature theme which played so great a part in the early poetry was not laid aside entirely at the time of the composition of the odes. "Amelia" proves that Patmore's intense interest in the beauty of the universe remained keen. Far from suffering from neglect, the nature-theme reasserts itself with strength, spontaneity and deftness of touch. The strokes are swifter and more accurate for its having been suppressed partially at the time of the composition of the odes.

"Amelia" brings together all that Coventry Patmore tried to do to reproduce natural beauty and to portray human love. After the strenuous exercise of the Odes, Patmore returned to an easier style of prosody. Knowledge of the reality of man's need for love, Patmore's own love for nature and for its Author were by his skill blended into one united whole. The success of this endeavour caused "Amelia" to rank with the best of Patmore's poetry. It reflected his

29

Coventry Patmore, "Amelia", 11.142-156.

attitude on all the major problems of prosody; his solution to the problem of metre, of choice of words, of subject matter. Here the poet fulfills Patmore's requirement that he be a seer, that he be intensely interested in the enduring things of the world. Thus it is that the judgment placed upon "Amelia" may be applied to the whole of Coventry Patmore's poetic work, that he reflects on his work a spiritual sublimation of the nature doctrine of William Wordsworth.

The nature theme of Coventry Patmore's poetry, in particular of the Odes and "Amelia" follows a well defined pattern. It was the intention of the poet to introduce the cycle of nature as symbolic of the union of man and woman in marriage and ultimately of the human soul with its Creator. It has been shown that the nature odes fulfill this intention. Despite his lofty ideal Coventry Patmore did not overlook the appealing aspects of nature. He used his deep knowledge of the world to lighten the atmosphere of the odes by means of similes in which nature played the major role.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The interest in nature in the poetry of Coventry Patmore has been manifested in descriptive passages, in the comparisons with which the poetry abounds and in the nature odes. In every instance the poet has kept a keen eye on his subject and has produced accurate pictures. Moreover, Coventry Patmore has shown himself to be in sympathy with the varied aspects of nature. All his scenes, whether of full or partial description, are painted with a delicate touch. His attitude has been that of one standing in awe before something too great to be grasped in its entirety. Coventry Patmore has looked upon the world with the vision of a prophet and seen the handiwork of God.

The concept of nature which enabled Coventry Patmore to see the universe in this manner is partially derived from his study of and admiration for the writings of William Wordsworth. His outlook on the world in general, on poetry, the function of poets and his method of portraying the beauties of the world in his poetry are stamped with the mark of Wordsworth's influence. However, Coventry Patmore possessed the ability to look beyond the visible universe in order to discover the realms of eternity. This trait is characteristic of all Coventry Patmore's poetry, not only of that of his later years. This appears to have been integral

to his system of thought. As such it makes itself known in the fleeting glimpses of natural beauty which were used as comparisons in even the most serious of the Odes.

There is sufficient similarity of thought on the topic of metrics to warrant further research into the theories proposed by William Wordsworth and Coventry Patmore. This area has not been studied in detail by any of the critics of Patmore's work. Coventry Patmore's "Essay on English Metrical Critics"¹ would bear comparison with William Wordsworth's "Preface" to Lyrical Ballads.

Since Coventry Patmore's manner of depicting nature is not entirely a result of his devotion to William Wordsworth it can be concluded that in general Patmore's concept of nature is of the same school as that of William Wordsworth. As Coventry Patmore has tempered his work with the impress of his own character, he may be regarded as a member of the Wordsworthian school who has blended his individuality successfully with that of his master. Coventry Patmore stands with Wordsworth but by reason of his own merits as a poet of spiritualised nature.

1

Coventry Patmore, "An Essay on English Metrical Critics", in The North British Review, issue of August 1857, Vol. 27, (Am. Ed. Vol. 22) p. 87-86.

- APPENDIX

Quotations from the Prelude, original version.¹

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought!
That giv'st to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion! not in vain
By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
Of Childhood didst Thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human Soul,
Not with the mean and vulgar works of Man,
But with high objects, with enduring things,
With life and nature, purifying thus
The elements of feeling and of thought,
And sanctifying, by such discipline,
Both pain and fear, until we recognize
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.²

Blest the Babe,
Nurs'd in his Mother's arms, the Babe who sleeps
Upon his Mother's breast, who, when his soul
Claims manifest kindred with an earthly soul,
Doth gather passion from his Mother's eye!
Such feelings pass into his torpid life
Like an awakening breeze, and hence his mind
Even (in first trial of its powers)
Is prompt and watchful, eager to combine
In one appearance, all the elements
And parts of the same object, else detach'd
And loth to coalesce. Thus day by day,
Subjected to the discipline of love,
His organs and recipient faculties
Are quicken'd, are more vigorous, his mind spreads,
Tenacious of the forms which it receives.
In one beloved presence, nay and more,
In that most apprehensive habitude
And those sensations which have been deriv'd
From the beloved Presence, there exists
A virtue which irradiates and exalts
All objects through the intercourse of sense.

¹De Selincourt, E., editor, The Prelude or Growth of the Poet's Mind, by William Wordsworth, London, Oxford, 1926, vii-21.

²William Wordsworth, The Prelude, Book Two, ll.428-441

APPENDIX

No outcast he, bewilder'd and depress'd;
Along his infant veins are interfus'd
The gravitation and the filial bond
Of nature, that connects him with the world.

Emphatically such a Being lives,
An inmate of this ACTIVE universe;
From nature largely he receives; nor so
Is satisfied, but largely gives again,
For feeling has to him imparted strength,
And powerful in all sentiments of grief,
Of exultation, fear, and joy, his mind
Even as an agent of the one great mind,
Creates, creator and receiver both,
Working but in alliance with the works
Which it beholds.³

A thought is with me sometimes, and I say,
Should earth by inward throes be wrench'd throughout,
Or fire be sent from far to wither all
Her pleasant habitations, and dry up
Old Ocean in his bed left sing'd and bare,
Yet would the living Presence still subsist
Victorious; and composure would ensue,
And kindlings like the morning; presage sure,
Though slow, perhaps, of a returning day.⁴

3

William Wordsworth, The Prelude, Book Two, ll.239-275

4

William Wordsworth, The Prelude, Book Five, ll.28-36.

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The Concept of Nature in the Poetry of Coventry Patmore with
Special Emphasis upon His Indebtedness to W. Wordsworth.
by Sister Mary Joanna, G.S.I.C.

Abstract

The concept of nature developed by Coventry Patmore was, in part, related to that found in the poetry of William Wordsworth. The outlook on nature which characterised the work of the latter was a personal, subjective one. Nature was admired for herself as well as for the benefits which she brought to her followers. In keeping with this line of thought, William Wordsworth regarded nature as a teacher and guide upon whom he could rely for help in times of stress.

As a result of his admiration for the poetry of William Wordsworth as well as for the study of his works, the early poetry of Coventry Patmore was plainly stamped with the impress of the Wordsworthian outlook upon nature. However, with the maturing of his own poetic genius, Coventry Patmore relied more upon his own theory of prosody. This revision of thought retained the love for nature expressed in the previous works, the use of simple language and thought, and added Coventry Patmore's own ideas concerning metrics and the idea of the supernatural. The practical application of the theory was seen in the ode series The Unknown Eros.

In order to illustrate the relationship between William Wordsworth and Coventry Patmore the theories of prosody of each poet were examined.

It was apparent that they shared a similar concept of the chief problems of the art of poetry.

The role of nature in the later poems of Coventry Patmore was explored for the purpose of determining the extent of Patmore's indebtedness to the work of William Wordsworth. In every instance it was found that the method of expression was typically Wordsworthian but that Coventry Patmore had used it in conjunction with his own spiritualised concept of nature. Throughout the odes there were many examples of the manner used by Coventry Patmore to portray nature. "Amelia" proves beyond doubt that Coventry Patmore retained his love for nature during his whole life-time and that he returned to a more relaxed though none the less supernaturalised outlook upon the external world toward the close of his poetic career.

The concept of nature found in the work of Coventry Patmore was Wordsworthian in tone but that it was individual in its mode of expression. It was concluded that Coventry Patmore belonged to the same school of nature poets as did William Wordsworth but that the spirituality of his outlook made his work stand apart from that of William Wordsworth. There was sufficient similarity of thought concerning metrics to warrant further research into the theories of prosody of William Wordsworth and Coventry Patmore.